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WHEN FOLKS WAS FOLKS

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When Folks Was Folks

By

ELIZABETH L. BLUNT

Cochrane Publishing Company
Tribune Building
New York
1910

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To My Children

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WHEN FOLKS WAS FOLKS.

(An idyl of the 1840's)

"There comes a voice that wakes my soul,
It is the voice of the years that are gone;
They roll before me with their deeds."

OSSIAN.

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When Folks Was Folks

CHAPTER I.

Old Ravenna.

In central New York, where the hills are high and the valleys narrow, and where pebbly stones are a full half of the furrow turned by the plow, there runs a small stream whose waters at last pour themselves into the Susquehanna. With a soft fringe of willow it glides through groves of maple, bass and buttonwood, where wild grape-vines climb to ripen their clusters in the early frosts. Butternuts and beeches drop hospitality and cheer for winter hearth and squirrel's nest. And behind, the meadows break suddenly into steep hills with a broad calm sweep of sky-line.

Here, the best part of a century back, lived a community of farmers. Large houses with comfortable outbuildings, well-stocked dairies, kitchen gardens, poultry yards and smoke-houses; cellars bursting with potatoes, onions, turnips, parsnips, carrots, squash and pumpkins; nuts and apples from ungrafted orchards, with pasture and wind-fall growing wild berries—all bespoke the thrift and ease that come close on the heels of pioneers when decent folk think it no shame to be provincial.

The second generation was still cutting down forests to secure a wider acreage, and pushing them into pits to be burned to charcoal. Cords of hemlock bark ready stripped for the tannery lined the highways. Strange looking peddlers were wandering over the country roads with huge packs tied up in bed-ticking, equally eager for

Spanish shillings and a knowledge of the English language. Other hawkers traversed regular routes with horse and wagon, carrying household articles for barter. If these seldom missed a customer, they met their match in the shrewd housewife eager to exchange her salt pork, butter, cheese, or wood ashes at a bargain. In train too came the tinker to mend the family tin-ware, to sit by the kitchen fire and dispense neighborhood gossip, or now and then bring a welcome bit of news from remote relative or friend who lived within the circle of his wanderings.

Travel was slow and laborious. Merchants went once or twice a year to Albany or New York, and when after fifty miles by stage over rough muddy roads they reached the Erie Canal, the rest of the journey by packet was a luxury indeed. One venturesome young man had gone as far South as New Orleans selling Magnetic Ointment and Mudge's Pills—a feat which for distinction ranked him with ex-congressmen and patriots who had gained coveted honors by serving in the State militia.

The valley already boasted a few industries; a saw-mill, a grist-mill, a cooper-shop, which made sap buckets and butter-tubs for sugar-bush and dairy, a tannery where rawhides were turned to leather to be fashioned again into boots and shoes by the village shoemaker; a carding-machine where huge fleeces became the rolls of wool that the housewife spun and knit into stockings and mittens, and a woollen-mill that wove fulled cloth for men's wear, and stuff for blankets and winter dresses. A few miles to the north the De Lands were making their first rude experiments in pearl-ash, and near-by stood the long curious shed that harbored the rope-walk. These, with a tin-shop, a harness-shop, and a gun-shop, met the simple needs of the community.

Up the valley about midway, where the road lingers a moment under shadow of the long hills, lay Ravenna, the largest and most thriving of its tiny villages. Here was the "Brick Store," on whose counters everything was current, from calico and candy to hardware and paper. Farm products could be exchanged for coffee, spice, and tools. The post-office was in one corner, and on the next floor above was housed the village lawyer, making his tidy profit off the quarrels of his neighbors.

Chairs drawn up around the warm stove furnished a general lounging-place after the day's work was done. Here on the long wintry evenings hard-featured, kindly men, with a heavy sense of duty, weighed in a sort of honest shrewdness the advantages and disadvantages of annexation with Texas. Or, interspersed with the filling of clay pipes, spitting at a mark, and heaping fresh logs on the fire, the veterans of "eighteen-twelve" would harangue with authority on Clay and Webster, Calhoun and Randolph. And when the mystery of life had them in its grip, as from time to time it gets us all, they would pound out some theory of accidents, prospect on the nature of life after death, speculate on the fate of Brigham Young driven from Illinois at point of bayonet, or guess the portent of the fiery comet seen at noon-day.

Not far from the Brick Store was a little, low, one-roomed shop that bore the sign—N. B. Ives, Tailor. Here I was sent once a year for list to nail on the doorways against the winter cold. The tailor's goose on the stove, Sniffin sewing on the bench, the smell of pressed woollen, and the sleek master of the shop, made a picture still fresh in my mind—this, and the school-children calling along the street—"Take notice! Take notice, Ives!"

The fashion plates in the window were my delight. The men were so handsome and so elegantly dressed—far more so than any who walked the streets of our vil-

lage; they could be matched only by the fair damsels who minced in wonderful toilettes across the page of colored fashions in Godey's Ladies' Book with red and blue and purple gowns, fringed crepe shawls, and pink bonnets tied under the chin, flaring to show their "artificials."

The tailor was the most dressy man in the village, his clothes at the same time advertising his business, and satisfying an inner craving for the beautiful. In his idle moments he cultivated an avocation that gained him some distinction. It was in the day before Wickwire had invented screens, and as the business of fly-catching was not yet lucrative, it was still honorable and might even be classed with the arts. When business was dull, "Take Notice Ives" would sit in his chair at the Brick Store, and, let him but raise his hand, conversation would stop, interest become intense, wagers fly fast; seldom indeed did it fall without a buzzing prisoner. No other could do the trick more than once in a thousand times. This skill alone made him a noted man, and, in later years, his trade given up, he pursued no other business.

The man who did the sewing in the shop was called Sniffin, a good name for one who sat cross-legged and silent on the tailor's bench all the week, stitching, stitching—as I thought, just doing women's work. No one knew where he had come from, for the heat of argument never drew from him more than a bare "Yes" or "No."

Sunday he got off his wooden bench, and we found he had only one leg. Often he would hobble away by himself and spend the whole day on the grass in some corner of the rail fence by the roadside. When driving to church, all safely tucked under my father's arm, I found him an object of interest, whittling his stick, or eating an apple, and muttering under his breath.

But if I were on foot and alone, it was different. Still an object of dread even when silent and grave, if, in a rage, he began thrashing his arms wildly about his head, well, he was sublime. Many a time I have turned and fled, or boldly asserting, "God will take care of me—God will take care of me," I have walked by very fast on the other side of the road. Sniffin's eye! I really dared not glance behind for fear he should be looking. He lived to be very old and died quite peacefully in his bed, but not so long ago, and he had paid the penalty of the Evil Eye.

Across the street was the shop of Jeremiah Dix, on the upper shelves of which stood long rows of silk hats carefully done up in white papers lest, in the long intervals between calls for this genteel article, their fair lustre be dimmed with the soil and grime of the everyday world. These hats had come from Albany years before when Jeremiah had returned from serving his apprenticeship, and were a monument to his craft, for in those days the skill of a hatter lay not so much in the selling,—the people's needs regulated that—as in the making. Wool hats with their air-tight guarantee were still a new thing. They were made in the back room where, in the air thick from steaming boilers of hot suds and dyes, Conkey sat all day stretching wet wool over wooden blocks.

Conkey was a great man. This small wiry frame that might be carrying any number of years from youth to age housed a fervid soul. No villager had been so far as he. Born somewhere on the Cornish coast, he had plunged still deeper into mystery by the strange character of his sea voyages, and his adventures in far countries among hitherto unknown peoples. A veritable Sinbad was Conkey to the boys, who would collect about him on summer evenings as he sat smoking his pipe in

front of the shop. Poor D. P. C. Conkey! He used often in sentimental mood to translate his numerous initials as, "Damn Poor Cuss Conkey," all which gave him enviable distinction with the rising generation.

"It's the dimijohn, boys, the dimijohn we uses in the hart o' 'at-manufacture as 'as cut my career in his flower," and Conkey would shake his head in warning, for no one in Ravenna had more correct moral ideas than he, poor soul. Yet I doubt if there was a boy there but would gladly have embraced the demijohn, crippled career, and life among steaming vats, to be the hero of Conkey's yarns. Nor for all his wise saws could you suspect Conkey at bottom of the least dissatisfaction with his lot.

The refreshing smile of Jeremiah Dix in some measure counteracted the smell of greasy wool and fur, and the shop was a favorite place for talking over local politics, and discussing the latest news from Congress. The good cheer dispensed so freely from behind the counter was a famous antidote for blues. Jeremiah had walked on one foot with the help of a crutch since he was twelve years old, and even now in middle life he sometimes suffered agonies from the rude surgery of eighteen-twenty-five, whose smooth cut had left the cords and muscles to shrink back, causing the most exquisite torture. Yet in spite of the pain, and the second operation, undergone without anæsthetic, the awkward crutch, and humble pride, no one in the village so kindly, so unselfish, so helpful as Uncle Jeremiah.

"Don't cry, little one," he says to the child in tears because her kitten is lost. "What! Did kitty run away on four legs? She'll run back on four legs, see if she don't."

To Wilson, poor and discouraged, laboring in a near-by village over his not yet completed sewing-machine,

"What does that long face mean?" he would exclaim. "You're as solemn as the town-clock. Why, you're a young man. Keep your courage up! you'll be a millionaire yet! Then you'll look down on us poor country folk. Ha! ha! ha!"

And long after, when Wilson's invention had harvested its million, he sought out the one-legged man and thanked him for his example of pluck and persistence, which beat back untoward circumstances and scattered a kind of bottled sunshine wherever he went.

Up and down the street from the Brick Store and its humble neighbors stretched a row of white houses with green blinds, each in the center of a grass plot, cool with the shade of elms and maples. Well-worn paths led through daffodils and pinks to side stoops shrouded in lilacs and syringas. From behind came glimpses of neat kitchen gardens bright with occasional hollyhocks and roses. Fresh, clean, sunny, in and out, there was little here to suggest the mystery or romance of decay.

But in the Lower Village, wrapped in a distinction of flagstone walks, gloomy pines, and fantastic story, was the Red Brick House. Here had lived since long before eighteen-twelve old Aristarchus Edred, who, as tradition went, had wed Abigail Howe in the woods by moonlight.

Again and again must the grandmothers tell the story of those first days—how as yet marriage had raised no question of licensed preacher, and how Aristarchus must go twenty miles away to fetch one from the neighboring county. The wedding day dawned fair—thus ran the tale—over the hill rode Aristarchus and his prize. With noise, and bustle and shout came the lumbering country wagons packed with guests, and along forest trails galloped many a good man stout in his saddle, child in front and good wife on the blanket behind.

Wraps once bestowed on the spare bed there was a hurried rush to the kitchen, where the great dinner was in preparation. Stores of good things stood ready in the pantries, to which it seemed Grandmother added some new and delectable dainty with every repetition of the tale. Roast venison, chickens, turkeys, pigs, fruit cakes, pound cakes, green currant and dried-apple pies, cookies, crullers, cups of custard flecked with bits of currant jelly, huge decanters of elderberry wine, and ever so much more, Grandmother would assure me. A great kettle of potatoes was hung on the crane, coffee simmered on the hearth, laughing, busy, chattering women flew about setting the table, paring, chopping, slicing, tasting everything.

Meantime in the front yard the men in coarse homespun with long woolen stockings stood around or leaned against the rail fence talking of the crisis now Washington was dead, prospecting on another war with England, and wondering to themselves when dinner would be ready.

At last it was over, the dishes washed, and the wedding supper laid. The ceremony was to be early, as some of the guests came from a distance. Now book in hand the long black-coated parson stands before the shrinking Abigail, and Aristarchus, faultless in a fresh-starched bosom, black satin stock, wine-colored velvet "wescot," black coat and small clothes, white silk stockings, and silver buckled shoes.

"H'm!" gasped the minister, closing the book with a snap.

"What's the matter? What's the matter?"

"Brethren." Then he stopped short. He looked around vaguely as if awakened from a dream. "Remember His majesty, the mystery of His awful dispen-

sation," he ran on as if seeking inspiration in words. "Fix your minds rather on the goods of eternity——"

"What's this nonsense?" asked Aristarchus, more human than reverent.

"Conquer your mind in the Lord, my brother—say—He giveth, He taketh away—blessed be His name forever, amen. But let not this hinder the refreshing the body—doth not the Book say there be times for all things?"

"Why, Elder! What's wrong? What do you mean?"

"I am moved by a divine warning that I may not lawfully perform this holy rite outside the precincts of my own county."

Imagine the wail of the ladies, the lofty unconcern of the men, and through it all the ringing voice of Aristarchus.

"Saddle your horses, neighbors, and fetch round your wagons; see to it your lanterns have plenty of oil; I say this wedding is coming off."

There is a clatter of horses' hoofs, a rumble of wagons over rough roads, and they are off by the shortest cut to the next county. There, under the green trees of a maple grove, by the light of the moon and some dozen or two hymeneal torches, Aristarchus and Abigail are made man and wife.

Half a century had vanished, and the lovers as I knew them were old and grey and feeble. Poor Aristarchus! Poor Abigail! Little enough in the halting step and withered cheek to recall the fire and beauty of that long ago. Yet this bit of poetry rescued from the twilight of two generations was like a magic dew in which the aged couple renewed their youth each morning—not a child in the village who thought them really old.

The people of Ravenna were simple folk whose ambition aspired no further than to thrift in business, regular attendance on divinely appointed worship, and the honest

effort to be good men and women. Neither wealth nor want complicated the social order. They did the best they knew with what they had to make life useful and attractive. Living for the most part happy and contented lives, they accepted with resolute mind what of grief or disappointment came their way, unwracked by the great passions of ambition, jealousy, emulation, or the agony that waits on lost opportunity and failure.

CHAPTER II.

Under the Shadow of the Hill.

About a mile from the Brick Store, on a road winding up from the valley to Union Center, there stood at the time of which I speak a large two-story frame house, a broad hall running through the middle parlors on either side, and kitchen and dairies stretching back into a fragrant garden. In summer, trees and shrubs nearly screened it from the occasional passer-by—a mountain ash crowned with scarlet berries, locusts whence the woodpecker drew his breakfast of soft grubs, a four-trunked balm-of-Gilead with spicy leaves and tasseled flowers, and maples spreading, in the strong north wind of autumn, a rug of brown and yellow and crimson leaves over the fading greensward.

Through the dooryard wound a gravel path edged with the yellow daffodils of early spring, and the hollyhocks, larkspur, and sweet william of late midsummer. Clumps of bluebells and columbine nodded in every breeze, dropping their shiny seeds in autumn for the next year's resurrection. Tall heavy-scented lilacs and wax-apple shrubs stood in odd corners, with here and there bright bunches of peonies, odorous bergamot, and feathery stalks of caraway.

To the rear was the kitchen garden, full of summer vegetables and sweet-smelling herbs. A well-worn path led to the early apple tree, under which was the row of bee-hives overhung on hot July days by a fretwork of returning insects heavy with the juice and perfume of far-away flowers. Currant and gooseberry bushes lined the fences, not too nice in that day to jostle in friendlywise with nettles, burdock, worm-wood, and horseradish.

Through the haze of near three quarters of a century steals the picture of a summer afternoon—calves feeding in the paddock close by, pigs crowding and pushing the fence in the lazy comfort of a noon-day sleep; the trickle of the spring falling into the trough from a mass of pussy-willows and ladies' ear-drops; the lane climbing the hill whence the cows came at nightfall from the pasture high toward the sky-line; cords of wood ready for the stove piled by the kitchen door, or lying in logs to be chopped and split in odd hours, and chips drying in the sun and wind; the well-sweep hung from the tall post and its pail of bricks and stones to balance the bucket in the cool depths; the bench near-by, with the basin and towel and mirror, poles overrun with hop-vines rustling down the roof and sides of the stone smoke-house and its treasures of hams and beef; across the road the barns, the long line of barn-swallows' nests, the carriage-house, the famous two-seated carriage, the heavy pegs, and the side-saddles.

The barnyard is almost deserted, the old hen-turkeys have taken their broods to the tall grass, and only the rustle of the gray tops or an occasional cluck-cluck tell their whereabouts. The ducks have waddled off to the river—just a patch of gray, green, and blue in the distance. Only the rooster and his dozen hens, each with a flock of chickens scratching their living from the soil, breathe of life.

And behind it all the bulwark of the valley—a hill so high the cows never reach the summit and the path of the wood-choppers is lost half way. When the sun bids the valley good-bye each evening, and leaves the river and its shadows and the branches of the elms dropping their sorry courtesies, the light lingers long on this hill-top as if whispering secrets of a morrow or peeping at the forbidden things of night. Promise, amid gathering chaos, of a glorious dawn, it broods over the valley like

that other Light of the World—alone in the whirl of change. Friends may die, houses fall to decay, forests fade in a night, and streams bend to human will—the hills are everlasting.

One generation had forced this scene from the wilderness. At the opening of the nineteenth century my grandfather, old "Square Lee," had moved with his family and goods from Lyme, at the mouth of the Connecticut River, into the wilds of central New York. They came with two ox-teams following forest trails, camping in the woods at night, braving the dangers of wild beasts and still wilder men. But pioneers are made of tough, unyielding fibre. Stout arms and undaunted courage met every obstacle half way, and through long vistas came glimpses of a horizon glowing with high hopes.

All this had been a half century past. The old "Square" was dead. The son who had cleared, planted, and reaped, taught school and done surveying, laid out townships in Tennessee, and slept on skins by trappers' fires in far-off Canada, had now succeeded to his father's duties, managed his farm with care and thrift, was deacon in the church and a man of some importance in the village. He was a tall athletic man with rugged face, dark hair and eyes, and overhanging brows—a stern, solemn face belying the warm, kind heart within.

My mother was a sweet-faced gentle-voiced woman with mild blue eyes, and soft brown hair hanging in two curls on either cheek, the whole framed in a dainty cap of lace and flowers and ribbon. There was a fineness about her that made her beautful even in old age. Her exquisite needle-work wrought garments specimens of which are still counted heirlooms. Through long summer afternoons she would sit by the window copying complex patterns of roses and leaves and vines upon lace veils, white dresses, or baby-caps, fastening with every

thread of floss loving thoughts of the coming baby, or forming plans of how she could add some brightness to a sister's lot that was not so free as hers.

And not only to her own kin did her sympathy overflow. She saw through the proud reserve of self-respecting friends whose limited purse forbade a visit to distant sister or mother, and her resourceful mind would make the desire a fact. I have been told she got my father out of bed one cold night to carry food and clothing to a poor widow whom she had forgotten in the afternoon. "The poor ye have always with you, and when ye will ye may do them good" might well have served as the motto of her life. "The best woman that ever lived was Deacon Lee's wife," said an old man recalling his early years in Ravenna; "she was a mother to us all, invited us to her house again and again, and did what she could to make us happy and useful."

My father's house was open to any one who claimed as his object the betterment of man, be he colporteur selling good books, temperance lecturer, anti-slavery advocate, traveling preacher, or ministerial candidate. All gravitated without opposition to Deacon Lee's. There was never an impatient word concerning the stay, though it might lengthen to weeks or months. The team was harnessed for every church meeting, be the farm work never so hurrying. No thought of hardship or burden tarnished the hospitality of this home or marred its offerings to religion.

My father had a very real belief in the practical and pleasant things of this world. His was the first cooking-stove brought into the village, and he was the first man in his part of the county to achieve the luxury and dignity of a two-seated covered carriage. This latter was the pride of the place, and brought its owner honor and responsibility in entertaining the few public visitors who

came to speak on the Fourth of July, or to address the people on the occasion of an election.

My mother was a careful manager, orderly and systematic. The work of the house and dairy was so arranged that she and those who assisted her could have time to sit down in the afternoon and do the family sewing. That was the key-note of the household—there was time for everything. Time for sewing, for reading, for visiting the poor and sick, for keeping up a healthy social intercourse with her neighbors, for the closest personal ties and sympathies with those of kin, time for the most unstinted hospitality, time for teaching her numerous younger sisters and nieces the secrets of cooking in her kitchen. An invitation to stay to supper was as sincere and cordial to the humblest visitor as to the occasional wealthy and aristocratic one. It never seemed a burden to the purse or to the busy hands that prepared the meals,—a few unexpected guests to supper.

In those days cheese—the main product of our dairy—was something of a luxury, and no friend called or departed but my mother slipped a three-cornered piece into her bag. The younger sisters, Marcia and Adeline, who often made part of the household, thought it simple to be always giving a piece of Indian bread, or cheese, or pat of butter, but when they became providers themselves, with hungry mouths to fill, and saw their sister coming with an armful of her pantry products, the custom wore a different look.

Family gatherings were a great thing in those days. Relatives living near-by were visited often, and those farther away at least twice a year. To a child like myself, whose life held promise of such sure delights as gathering herbs with Aunt Betsy, a lump of maple sugar, or a ride to mill beside my father, but who was not surfeited with complex toys and abnormal pleasures,

this event of going to see my aunts and uncles twenty and forty miles away was interwoven with delicious expectation. What with the new clothes, the jockey hat, prospect of secrets with some cousins and not with others, the run on the garden wall, I already felt independent of Aunt Betsy's company and Grandmother's stories.

On the morning of the departure all would be bustle at the barn. Stephen would give the horses an extra feed of new hay, and a brimming box of oats. While he put on the silver-plated harness, he would shout to Ledyard, "Roll out the carriage and dust the cushions and the top," for the boys took as much pride in the Deacon's equipage as the owner himself.

In the house my father would be putting on his stiff dickey, high collar, and black satin stock, and brushing his hair up straight. My mother would say, "Adeline, put in a piece of cheese for Deborah," and Grandmother, "Jennet, be a good girl and keep your dress clean," and Aunt Betsy, "I'll be some lonely till you get back, Jennet," all which would go in one ear and out the other, so anxious was I to get on the front seat and be off.

At last the carriage would be at the door, the trunk strapped on behind, and the basket of apples and lunch pushed under the back seat. Meantime, too happy to talk, with the goods of this world so within grasp, I would sit quite still in my place, legs dangling, given up for the moment to thought of the candy waiting in the little country store at the cross-roads.

After many cautions to those standing at the gate to remember this and do that, we would at last be off, mother calling back from the carriage-window, "Be careful not to set the house on fire."

The level valley left behind, we soon began climbing the long hills. Father, Grandmother, and Uncle An-

drew would tell the stories, and mother and I ask the questions. What joy for this brief space not to be merely seen! It was a real vacation, where I and my elders listened in turn.

"See that house," said Uncle Andrew on one occasion, pointing to a neat comfortable farm-house bearing the unmistakable stamp of thrift and economy, "that's where Mis' Pike lives."

"Alone?" asked mother.

"Dear no," said Uncle Andrew, "she's got a husband and a few sons. But she's the boss, you understand."

"I know her," broke in Grandmother, "she's so stingy she'd like to take the color out of your cheeks to save buying cochineal."

"The same. Well, Dayton, that's the second boy, and I used to go to school together, and knew one another pretty well. One day I was driving by and reined up for a talk. 'I got a bushel o' blackberries up in the back lot yesterday,' he said, 'come in and have a piece of pie.' I didn't have to be asked twice, for it had been a long time since breakfast, and I followed him round to the kitchen door. 'We've come for a piece of blackberry pie, mother, one of those you baked this morning.' At that her face withered up like a spring russet. 'Aint dinner-time,' was all she said.

"'I know, but what d'ye say to it's bein' time for lunch?'

"'I can't cut a hot pie; you'll have to wait for dinner.'

"I was sorry for Dayton, he looked mortified to death. 'I suppose the law of the cook holds,' was all he said, and we walked back to the team."

By and by we came to the cross-roads, the little store, the candy, and a great still meeting-house.

"Do you know Jonas Prindle, that has the saw-mill

on Rock Run?" asked Uncle Andrew. "Rather an under-sized man, rather pompous and slow of movement?"

Everybody knew him but me.

"Well, he's a member of this church, and one Sunday, just as the preacher was ready to begin his sermon, a strange woman comes in dressed in an extra large hoop. Joe always does the polite thing, you know, so up he gets, not very fast, but just graceful-like, while the rest are taking it in that the stranger won't have any seat of her own. He shows her up to one of the pews in the side front. She is so late and so afraid of causing disturbance she doesn't take time to get clear in or close the door of the slip. So her hoops and skirts stand out in the aisle a foot or more. As Jonas turns, his heel catches in the mesh. He throws up his hands to get his balance, makes a spring, stumbles, jumps again, and only saves himself by falling into the back seat at the door. Well, you know the Sunday kind of stillness—it was just like a toad, his jumps—they say it was one too many even for the deacons; there was a general smile, and lots of folks had to blow their nose—I wonder if Jonas ever thinks of hoops when he sails up the aisle like a ship of a Sunday morning."

Climbing one of the longest hills, we overtook an old man carrying a heavy bundle, and my father asked him to ride. Conversation began about the weather, the crops of hay and oats, but soon turned to matters in which he took a more lively interest. He knew every person we met on the road, knew them and all their weak points as if they had been his own.

"There goes Seth Thomas; I bought three bushels of potatoes of him ten year ago, and when I measured 'em up after he had gone they was a peck short. What do you think 'o that? He's about the meanest man I know, if he is a church member."

"Neighbor," said my father, "I guess there's some good point in him, now confess; can't you mention one?"

"Well, stranger, if there is, it would take the devil to find it. But I stop here, good day, and thanks for the lift."

"Poor soul," said my father, "if he finds a fault, he makes it legion by repetition."

Much visiting and feasting awaited us at our journey's end. Friends and relatives came in from miles around, and while we made sad havoc of the roast pig and his ear of green corn, the turkey and chicken-pie, ties of the past were once more renewed, the lost threads were picked up, varied interests became personal, and sympathies were freshened.

CHAPTER III.

Grandmother Lee and Aunt Betsy.

The fire on the old-fashioned hearth-stone blazed bright. Some brands on the andirons were dropping coals into the hot ashes below, where potatoes had just been roasting, and there was a delicious odor of ham broiled on the embers. The kettle still sang on the crane, while the tea-pot, drained of its fragrant Hyson, stood empty on the table.

Grandmother Lee and Aunt Betsy sat in their comfortable rocking-chairs, splint-bottomed but soft and easy with goose-feather cushions. They had just pushed back from the breakfast-table. A green log added to the fire was sending out its spicy smell with a great sputter, and cackle and hiss.

"Betsy," said Grandmother, "you're not feeling well. What's the matter?"

"Oh, what with my aches and pains last night——"

"There it is! You don't go at it right to keep well—take cold baths and a rub-down, so the blood gets all in a tingle. Aches. I don't have aches!"

"Ah, Jennet, you were brought up with the salt-water fish in the Sound, but I come from the back country nigh to Hartford. Besides, rheumatism needs hot things."

Grandmother Lee straightened up in her chair, and a slight wave of disgust passed over her vigorous face. "Hot things? Hot things! I've kept going these seventy years on cold water and cold baths and look at me. I can ride horse-back with anyone yet," and turning to me she said,—"Jennet, go tell Stephen to put the side-saddle on old Phillis and bring her round to the hitching

post at one o'clock. I think I'll go and see Mrs. Covert this afternoon."

"Sister Lee! Sister Lee! Why! Why! Horse-back riding! Stephen could just as well take you in the carriage."

"La! La! Nobody is older than he feels. I'm not going to work when I'm tired nor sew when the light is poor, but a horse-back riding I'll go so long as my joints keep limber."

"But lots of folks haven't any horse-blocks."

Grandmother Lee and Great-aunt Peck, two old ladies just passing the limit of three score years and ten, lived in a wing my father had added to his house for their accommodation. Aunt Betsy, as she was called by the whole valley, from the little one of the household to the doctor who came occasionally astride his horse with pill-bags behind him to give a dose of calomel, was a loving, helpful, gentle woman. Her face was quiet in the extreme—perhaps her troubles had worn her expression to the unvarying calm that admitted degrees neither of elation nor depression. Her step was slow and soft as suited the brooding spirit of the family, going about picking up forgotten duties, dispelling friction by her pleasant smile and willing hands. She had learned the limit of suffering from a brutal husband—perhaps it was this that had made her the most patient, the most forgiving, the most charitable of women.

In her spirit lovingkindness was transfigured. Quick to scent trouble and carry her healing balm she was indeed the ministering angel of the valley. Where others committed scripture to memory, she put it into practice. With loving thought for others she gathered sweet and bitter herbs in their season, dug the roots of gold thread and sarsaparilla, narrow-leaf dock and Indian turnip. She had no equal for the brewing of old-fashioned reme-

dies; her skill as nurse was unrivaled, and if a neighbor was sick or in trouble she would be the first to know and carry her unstinted service.

She had been brought up in the strictest way by fathers who had narrowly escaped the papist snares and persecutions. Her ancestor John Lee had written on his death-bed in 1710 a charge to his descendants to the end of the world, saying, "I charge that you choose death rather than deny Christ in any wise or degree, that you never turn papist nor heretic, but serve God in the way you were brought up, and that you avoid all evil companions, lest you be led into a snare and temptation."

Good old soul that she was and full of charity, she yet thought reckless deviltry housed within the case of a violin and was let loose when the fiddler drew his bow across the catgut. When Stephen came to live with us he brought the fiddle he had made himself, and would while away winter evenings by the kitchen fire playing airs he had heard at some country dance or oftener new melodies that sprang from his own heart. At first Aunt Betsy thought it hardly a proper thing to be done in a Deacon's house, but her gentle spirit found it much easier to excuse than to find fault, and she endured in silence. It was not long, quick as she was to discover good in everything, before she saw in it a desirable rival to the attractions of the Lion's Head; for Stephen's violin brought many of the neighborhood boys to spend their quiet evenings in the hospitable kitchen of Deacon Lee.

Dear Aunt Betsy, so kind to me, the only child in the family. When my world was out of tune, she knew just how to put good-humor and me on terms again. How I watched the time for her to go upstairs and make her bed in the morning, for then the cupboard door would open and down would come a teaspoon of candied honey from the black-flowered bowl. Once we found the glass de-

canter that had stood on her bureau empty since I could remember, lying in a thousand pieces on the floor, and she told me how in the night she had been suddenly awakened and had heard the decanter go "Ching!"

"If only it doesn't mean bad news, Jennet," she said as she picked up the pieces. But sure enough, two weeks later a letter from Connecticut brought word that her only sister had died that very night.

Aunt Betsy's head was full of quaint and picturesque notions. Whatever anyone had cut or injured himself with must, if portable, be brought to the house, greased, wrapped in a flannel, and set in a warm place; this to hasten recovery. Many a rusty nail has she hunted, or broken knife, or sharp ax, that had slipped from unsteady hands, and brought to her hospital behind the kitchen stove. Laughter and jokes never disturbed her equanimity. She would say, "You do all you can, and Aunt Betsy will do all she can."

My grandmother was a very different person. Had her lot been cast among Quakers, her place in the meeting-house would have been at the head of the top seat. Her step was springy and elastic. She sat erect. There was no stoop to her shoulders from the seventy-five or even eighty years that had brought her from the preceding century. She worked faithfully at the duties of the household, but when she was tired she stopped and someone else might finish, usually Aunt Betsy. She took a just pride in her cooking, and her recipes for mother cake and crullers were prized throughout the village. She was always making demands on the boys' time, but the pieces of pie she shoved through the pantry window as they passed to work would disarm the most chronic grumbler.

In middle life she became deaf and had to use a trumpet, but she enjoyed church, the sewing-society, and

afternoon tea-party with as keen a zest as ever. There was no settling back in the corner until people should come to speak to her. She took the lead herself, never suspecting for a moment that anyone might talk about her or say unpleasant things or make remarks she wasn't to hear. Knowing her intentions were right she approved of herself, and thinking that others understood her as she was, she had nothing to be ashamed of, but enjoyed life and its good things to the full, and gave God thanks.

Her eyes, undimmed by age, were black and snapping; few, I venture, saw better what was passing in Ravenna. A black front-piece covered the grey hair outside the soft white frill of her closely fitting muslin cap. The crimp on her ruffles was very fine, and the strings tied under her chin lay always in a smooth square bow.

She had seen more of the world than most of her neighbors, for her daughter's husband was the minister over one of the largest Baptist churches in Philadelphia, and she had two brothers in New York, who were tea-merchants trading with China. She herself had been born and reared on the shore of Long Island Sound, where vessels coming from Old England brought a more refined manner of living than had as yet drifted to central New York.

When, as sometimes happened, her critical advice was unrelished in the family, my mother would say:

"Respect her ideas, my dears, they are smarter and more genteel than ours. She comes from Lyme, Connecticut, you know."

Her vigorous health had been nourished by rather unusual means. Born on the sea-shore, she was an expert swimmer, and if by chance now in her old age she went bathing in the river with the girls, she liked nothing better than ducking them to hear them scream. If a cold or a fever, or a lame back caught her unawares, she

would call my father to draw two pails of water from the well, in winter as often as in summer, and pour it over her while she sat on the step of the wood-house and gave herself a vigorous rub, finishing up before the blazing fireplace in her own room. So she kept lithe and limber, no clog on her joints or on her spirits either, for she enjoyed a joke and gave one with the zest of youth. Although her sallies of wit were not always pleasant to those at whom they were directed, her bearing and general status in the village, even more than her age, prevented retorts.

She held fine clothes in esteem, but perhaps not more so than superiority in any line, yet she didn't despise anyone for plain dress if the pocketbook didn't warrant better. When the girls of the house were ready for a party she would come out of her rooms with a bottle of perfume to scent their handkerchiefs—an excuse to find out which one had on the handsomest dress.

Our family proper was small in number, but as invitations were free and welcomes cordial, there was always a troupe of visitors, and cousins innumerable. When we had so-called charity-company, like Old Square Bibbins, or Granny Garnsey, or any other tiresome or commonplace person, Grandmother was invisible. But if ever there was a choice guest, some one especially delightful, then she would come with a personal invitation to her own table, sometimes when we were already seated, and no one had ever the temerity to refuse.

I can see her now, after sixty years have gone, as she came through the gate on Sunday morning. After the family had been waiting some moments her door would open and she would come down the path with the elastic step of a girl, tall and straight in her dress of fine black bombazine, with its full plain skirt, and waist laid in tiny plaits drawn to a sharp point in front. Her dainty mus-

lin collar and cuffs, her gold chain—for years the only one in the village, the gift of her brother in New York, as was also the gold ring she put on when dressing for church or company—her white straw bonnet trimmed with lavender ribbon, her black silk mitts and velvet bag embroidered and fringed with steel beads in which lay a very white pocket handkerchief, her gold-bowed spectacles, and a few lumps of sugar should she feel like coughing during the service—everything about her was stamped with the elegance and refinement of the eighteenth century belle brought up in the Griswold home at Giant's Neck in Old Lyme. A black silk shawl was drawn tightly about her shoulders or, if her grasp loosened, fell in shiny folds upon her arms, to be gathered up again and put in place. As she came through the door-yard she would stoop to pick a sprig of bergamot and thrust in the bag to give it a sweet odor, or break off a spray of aromatic caraway to eat as we rode along.

In those days of 1845 the most striking thing to a stranger attending the Presbyterian Church on Sunday morning must have been to see an old lady taking her seat in the pulpit just as the sermon began. She sat always at the minister's left, with trumpet to her ear. Dignified, silent, self-possessed, she sat there. No one smiled, no one turned to his neighbor with a whisper. Perhaps it was the gold chain and silver trumpet. At any rate there she sat while the old preacher lived; when he died and a young one came to take his place, she went to her slip in the body of the meeting-house, punctual and attentive always.

Both Aunt Betsy and Grandmother were deeply religious women, but in different ways. Hearing God's word and studying its meaning by meditation and prayer was my grandmother's method. For this certain times were set apart, when she would retire to her own room

and on no account was she ever to be disturbed. When neighbors came, the grandchild had early learned to say, "You'll have to wait; grandmother's in the bed-room a-prayerin'."

The one was aristocratic by nature, the other democratic; the one critical, the other compassionate; the one handsomely dressed, the other plain; the one loved a joke, the other stood ready to administer balm to wounded feelings.

Aunt Betsy's great object in life was to be a kindly help to her neighbors and friends and to promote the welfare of the Baptist Church. From her small purse flowed drops of comfort for every good cause presented to her notice. The bed-quilt she had pieced during the winter was sure to go into the next box packed for the missionaries in Burmah, notwithstanding the expostulation of Grandmother. Sometimes one cow in the dairy belonged to her, or a half-dozen sheep in the farmer's flock, then the yellowest pat of butter, and the first pair of striped blue and white mittens were saved for the minister.

Aunt Betsy was sitting as usual one morning by the old-fashioned loom from which she had brought many a web of linen for the bed and square of huckaback for towels, clover-blossom patterns for table-cloths, blue and white kersey for men's wear, bright plaid flannel for winter dresses and heavy white flannel for bed-blankets. It was in this way she earned the few dollars that made her an independent woman.

Suddenly she left the loom, went into the pantry, and was moulding a pat of butter into shape, pressing on it the imprint of the rose-stamp, when Grandmother exclaimed:

"Betsy, are you laying out that butter for the minister? And you don't think of giving away the quilt you

have just finished? I heard they were packing a box in the Baptist parsonage to send to India. How do you think you are going to keep warm this coming winter? They say it's going to be snapping cold. Have you noticed the squirrels on that butt'nut tree? Look! they're at it now! I don't know when I've seen them so busy. Yes, it's sure to be a bad winter and it's my opinion you'll need your quilts yourself."

A pause for breath and she hurried on:

"You gave away your new blankets last year, and now I suppose the quilt with pieces of your dead daughter's two dresses goes to the same place. Betsy, you'll rue the day. Take my advice, and keep that album quilt for yourself."

"The Lord will provide," said Aunt Betsy good-humoredly, looking toward her sister Lee, who was two years older than herself, and of such a spirit that deference to her wishes seemed a law of nature. Aunt Betsy's easy way annoyed Grandmother exceedingly. Her eyes took on a darker shade, her head straightened back on her shoulders, and the frill of her closely fitting white cap trembled with her intense interest.

"There are pieces in that quilt of Elizabeth's and Jennet's dresses—both dead and gone—and of that pretty Scotch gingham Maria Williams used to wear before they lost their property and moved to Pennsylvania. Then there's a piece of Mother Boyd's French calico that came from Albany in war-time and cost a dollar a yard; and Mrs. Covert's camelet cloak, and little Johnnie Bacon's dress he wore the day he was scalded so bad, and George's wife Eliza wrote all those names on the blocks. Why Betsy! your feelings can't let you give that quilt to the heathen!"

Aunt Betsy's mild blue eyes kept closely to the apple she was paring for dinner. She made no answer; indeed,

she couldn't make her Sister Lee hear unless she left her work and screamed in her ear. So Grandmother went on unchecked.

"Everybody knows you are so generous you would take the food from your mouth and the dress from your back to give any one who wanted it. I should say if that man had any spirit, and I don't care if he is a minister—he would just refuse to take the last pound of butter from a poor widow or let his wife take it either."

At this Aunt Betsy bestirred herself, laid aside the dish of peelings, and lowered her mouth to the deaf woman's ear:

"Touch not mine anointed and do my prophets no harm," she cried, and then began setting the table for two.

Later the pat of butter was put in a small basket beside a pie-shaped piece of cheese to be carried to Becky Locke, with whom she would stay after Covenant meeting until the next day, which was communion Sabbath.

"Betsy, have you brought in those caps I washed this morning?"

"Yes, and damped them, and the flat-irons are about heated."

"Well, you iron and I'll sit down to crimp the ruffles; they'll be enough to last three weeks at least," and Grandmother, picking out the green-handled thin steel knife, was soon gathering the soft folds of muslin in fine plaits tightly held under thumb and first finger.

"Betty, what are you going to do with that pat of butter on the pantry shelf?"

"It's Covenant meeting today and I can't afford to miss that—the butter is for Becky Locke."

"What, walk to the Lower Village after all the work you've done today!"

"Oh yes, it will rest me, and I'm going to stay over

night with Becky; her mother is poorly and I'm afraid she'll not last long."

"Well, I think you're foolish; you might wait till Sunday morning and ride as far as the Brick Store, then it wouldn't be such a walk, but if you're bound to go, get a drawing of that best old Hyson tea for dinner. It's a'most gone, but we'll have one good cup anyway, for you've a long way before you.

"I don't know when John and Lyndes will send another box. I always think it's the last chest we'll get. Young men don't often remember such old women as we are. But they think of the time they spent in Butt'nuts—I guess they don't forget Aunt Betsy binding up their sore fingers with green salve, mending torn clothes, and soothing Uncle Jason's wrath when they were found out in some of their pranks. Yes, and I guess they don't forget either the cups of boneset tea for headache, or Aunt Lee's Indian bread and baked beans just out of the oven, when they got home from the Academy, or their sliding down hill and snow-balling.

"Brother George's idea was about right that farm chores along with school is good training for city boys. Yes, John and Lyndes are smart business men, as their father was before them, and I guess the four years they spent with us weren't lost on them, either."

"Betsy, do you remember the wild cat they killed out in the woods, and how smart they felt, and the sign John put on the barn, so everybody driving by would know what a big thing they had done? and how proud he was to write to New York about it? I guess that was about the last wild cat in Otsego County. Dear me! that was as much as thirty years ago. Why, Betty, those boys are between forty and fifty! Well, they have remembered us a long time, bless them! they'll always be boys to me."

CHAPTER IV.

Grandmother's Parlor.

Grandmother loved distinction not only in things but in persons. It was one of her aims to cultivate acquaintance with those better conditioned than herself, better educated, more experienced and of wiser mind. She herself had an exclusive air, as had also her parlor. Not that its individual pieces were different from those of her day, but the room as a whole had a decided personality. It was a company room, and like Sunday clothes, existed only for set times and occasions.

Its windows were darkened by oil-cloth shades covered with wonderful pictures of impossible landscapes that never were, tall birds and little houses they might have carried under their wings, and people it would have done Darwin's heart good to see, so strong was the mark of their rise from the monkey. A dish-cupboard built in the wall held the best china tea-set brought from Old Lyme, where all the things happened in the stories she told. Here was the glass decanter with its china label saying "port wine," though since my memory the wine it had held was Grandmother's own, made from currants I had helped gather myself—in proof of which was the straggling line of bushes behind the bee-hives. Beside the decanter was an old mug, gold-lacquered on the outside, though most of it had worn off, which had been given to Great-grandfather Lee by a member of his church in Connecticut. And there were the silver spoons marked M. G., a part of her wedding outfit in 1795, the willow-ware plates, and Chinese pot of preserved ginger. The choice tea brought from China stood in a canister beside a britannia tea-pot ready for a brew if Mother

Boyd and Julia happened in, or any other friend who knew a good cup of tea.

Pushed against the wall between the two windows was a curley maple table with clover leaves, one of which was always down. Its slender legs with feet encased in brass castors were certainly genteel enough to have come from New York on a visit. The spread was a black merino shawl with a gay border. On the table was a memoir of Ann Haselton Judson, a copy of Young's "Night Thoughts," a New Testament, the Book of Psalms in large print, and a History of the Baptists, in which was due record of the Rev. Jason Lee, born in the same year with Washington, and the second pastor of the church in Lyme.

The chairs of dark wood were made bright with gilt trimmings, like the settee, whose hard bottom was relieved by a feather cushion covered with leather and topped by green baize. It was a slippery seat, and I liked it because I could keep falling to the floor and nobody could scold.

A bureau with many drawers stood in one corner, and to be allowed to lay over the middle one was a privilege rarely granted and therefore highly prized. In this were Grandmother's ornaments—her gold chain lying in soft cotton in a box of many colored straws made by the Indians, her gold ring with its initials G. G. to J. Lee, her gold-bowed spectacles and silver ear trumpet, used only when she went visiting or to church. But the treasure was the wedding slippers, originally of white corded silk but now yellow with age. They were decorated with spangles long since dimmed, a running vine of silk embroidery, and a ribbon-rosette on the sharply pointed toe. The high French heels were about as big around as your little finger, so that when I tried them on I fell over at once. But she would slip her feet in them, telling of

the Connecticut parties they had been to, and step around like a gleeful girl.

Brass andirons stood in the fireplace shining with a golden lustre from frequent scourings, and vied in brightness with the brass candlesticks on either end of the mantelpiece, sentries to guard the kneeling Samuel, a white plaster figure bought of a peddler in one of his wandering tours through the country. Close by stood the ubiquitous snuffers and tray, also of brass. The embers and partially burned stick covered with ashes during the night were opened up in the morning and became the foundation of the next day's fire. To hasten the flame a tiny pair of bellows was used to blow the half-dead coals to life. This hung at one side of the fireplace, a constant temptation to children whose joy it was to blow the ashes. Many a stern lesson in self-control has Grandmother taught with the aid of the bellows beside that fireplace.

An odd piece of furniture occupied another corner, its shiny surface throwing into relief the feathery grain of its choice wood. This was the locker full of drawers and cupboards, with carved posts and curved lines. This, too, had come from the old house at Giant's Neck, and had its place in many a thrilling Revolutionary tale of red-coats and lost silver.

There were a few pictures on the wall; some silhouettes of Grandmother in high frizzed coiffure, a broad crimped ruff about her neck, with her head in that indescribable poise so characteristic of her prevailing temper; and of her husband in ruffled shirt bosom and attitude befitting the staid deacon. There was also a profile drawing of her son Woodbridge, done in pencil by a college class-mate.

Over the mantel hung "The Tired Soldier," in bright colors—a little boy armed with a wooden sword, a feather

in his cap, lying fast asleep while a big dog kept watch. Then there was the certificate of membership in a missionary society. Near the top huddled a crowd of little savages, a white man in the center—supposed to be Adoniram Judson—reading them a book, and below an inscription recording the gift which had made her a member and explaining to what it entitled her.

On the broad unbroken inside wall hung a picture called "The Tree of Life." The tree itself was the most prominent thing in the picture, with its little fruits labeled love, charity, forgiveness, peace, and the like. In the distance were the towers and walls of the "Celestial City," with few indeed traveling toward it. The bottom of the picture was separated from it by a high wall below which was a great highway leading to the far corner, where clouds of smoke shot through by sulphurous flames were bursting up from a black lake in the midst of which queer little devils swam about lashing their tails. Here were the gay women in hooped petticoats with feathers in their hair, men frolicking, miserable or decrepid, each with an apple marked pleasure, discord, envy, deceit, or greed, while busy little humpbacked imps, with extra long tongues, ears, and noses, hung about whispering mischief. On they hastened, apparently unconscious of the lake toward which their feet were leading them, while spirits hidden in flame and smoke waited net in hand to catch their souls.

A company day had come and gone. Grandmother sat in her rocking chair before the open fire; back log, front log, and top stick had dropped to a mass of glowing embers whose light brought the wayfarer of this world and the lurid flames of hell into a sombre foreground. Jennet crept into her lap, and snuggled down to the warm

arms that were always ready to receive her. Each sat silent, gazing at pictures fancy saw in the dying coals.

Then Jennet said, "And now, Grandmother——"

"Now what?" asked Grandmother, pretending she didn't know.

"The war song where you tear away your clothes."

"No, not that, tonight, my little lamb."

"Then a story," and as she glanced at the mantel. "Tell about Samuel."

"I think you could tell about that yourself."

"Yes, but I want to hear you."

Then Grandmother began—how Hannah took the little Samuel to Eli the High Priest to wait on him, and minister before the Lord; how Eli put on him a white girdle of fine linen when he handled the gold and silver pieces of the tabernacle service in the time of religious festival; how Hannah made a little coat and brought to him from year to year when she came to offer the annual sacrifice, and how Samuel grew in favor with God and man.

And one night when Samuel was laid down to sleep the Lord called, "Samuel? Samuel?" and he answered, "Here am I." But when he saw no one he ran to Eli and said, "Here am I, for thou calledst me." And Eli said, "I called not; lie down again," and he went and lay down, and the Lord called again, "Samuel? Samuel?" and he rose and went to Eli again and said, "Here am I, for thou didst call me."

Here Grandmother paused, the coals on the hearthstone were growing dim, the shadows bobbing up and down among those strange scenes on the oil cloth shades, and her deep solemn voice calling "Samuel? Samuel?" filled Jennet with awe. She looked behind at the dark corners, the floor gave a crack, she felt a wierd something in the air. The little white Samuel knelt there on the mantelpiece—a shiver caught her, and while the

story went on to the end in the disaster of Eli and his sons, she drew Grandmother's dress closer and closer about her, saying at last:

"Grandmother, you sleep with me tonight."

"I can't leave my bed, my dear, I shouldn't rest."

"Oh, but you did. You stayed almost a week with Mrs. Isaiah Lord."

"What's the matter? You're not afraid, are you?"

"But I don't want to be alone in the dark."

"God is all through the dark. He takes care of little girls."

"Oh, but that's just it. He isn't, Grandmother."

"What do you mean, Jennet? God is everywhere."

Then Jennet whispered her secret in Grandmother's ear.

"He was not there! When I was all alone in bed I felt everywhere between the sheets and He was not there! and besides, Grandmother, I want somebody that's warm" —after which Grandmother took her to bed and read her to sleep.

CHAPTER V.

Old Square Bibbins.

"I declare, Achsah! if there isn't old Square Bibbins coming through the gate again for an all day's visit," exclaimed Adeline none too amiably, looking up from the cheese-cloth she was washing out ready for the morning dairy. "It's only a week ago yesterday he was here for dinner. But probably he brings a bag of news, and that's something."

Just across the river were a few houses huddled together on four corners going by the name of Bangall. There was the tavern for dispensing rum and lodging strangers whom night overtook, and a blacksmith shop under a precipitous cliff stood ready to repair wagons and horses after a rough journey on the stony roads that led down from the hill farms. During the summer a foot-bridge was thrown across the stream for the convenience of neighbors on either side. Often it was only a tree felled on one bank tall enough to reach well over, or sometimes two, the second serving as hand-rail to help the unsteady passenger.

Just beyond this bridge dwelt "Square Bibbins," an old man of medium height, rather portly, with sharp blue eyes, stubby grey hair that showed no sign of falling away, ruddy cheeks, and an irritable temper. He lived in his son's family, and though sons' wives are sometimes more thoughtful than own children, in this case the poor old man's room was better than his company. No doubt he knew it, for he often strolled across the foot-bridge and down to the Deacon's, where he was sure of pleasant words, a kindly spirit, and a good dinner.

The young folks got tired of seeing the brown woolly clothes colored with butternut shucks and woven at the mill three miles north shuffle in with such regularity on the big square-toed boots and stout cane, but the mistress of the house would say:

"Poor old gentleman! He has little enough to make him happy. If he likes coming, don't turn him away with cold looks."

On this particular morning he came to the back stoop, where the dairy was in full progress. My mother met him with a smile, saying:

"How are you, Square, and how are the folks across the river?" With a few more commonplaces she handed him a chair, and laying the weekly newspaper beside him added, "You'll stay to dinner, won't you?"

To which he readily acquiesced, that in fact being the very thing he had come for.

"I'm busy now and can't stop to visit, but at dinner Mathew'll be here," and immediately the old man settled down to a comfortable forenoon.

The making of the cheese now proceeded. A big tub twice the size of an ordinary one, painted red on the outside and white within, held the milk of the evening and morning from sixteen cows. It was now a sweet curd. Separating the whey and putting in the press followed. At the last turn of the screw Jennet cried from the hall door:

"Quick! there's a million cows down the road!"

"What's that?"

"Oh, quick!" and her mother, Adeline, and Square Bibbins all followed to the front door.

Sure enough, cows, oxen, heifers, steers, and calves were hooking, jostling, bucking, and lashing their tails, as far as one could see.

"Do you think it's the resurrection?" asked Jennet.

"No, only a drove of cattle going to market."

"Well, did you ever! Achsah, do you see that brown basket down there in the elm? How ever did she get up there?"

"What do you mean? I don't see anything."

"There's only one such basket in Ravenna. Can't you make it out yet? It's Granny Garnsey on the rail fence hanging to the tree for dear life. Well! I didn't know she had spring enough for that! When the cattle get by and she can climb down, we'll have more company."

They all returned to the back stoop, and presently Jennet, who stood guard when there was nothing else to do, came flying out to announce the new arrival, who almost immediately appeared herself around the corner.

"Good morning, Mrs. Garnsey. How are they all down street?"

"Pretty well, with the exception of Ann Maria Collins. Her boy Jotham's going out west and she's all broke up over it, says she'll never see him again. He says he's goin' to leave these tarnel meddlesome folks an' go west an' grow up 'ith the country; but his mother aint willin'."

"I suppose he's been reading Horace Greeley. I think maybe it is a good place for young men."

"That's jes' what I made out to Mis' Collins, but she can't see it."

"No wonder—lying on that bed for five years."

"Yes, yes, I told Mis' Collins Jotham ought to stay with her, an' if he's a good boy he will, too. I allus say, boys should be good to their mothers. Somebody started the story that Jotham stole that wheat from La'yer Miles's farm, an' he can't get over the disgrace. Says if they was only somebody he could lick an' make 'em swaller their yarn, he'd stay."

"That would be a poor way to clear it up."

"Them's my sentiments, too. I told Mis' Collins so,

an' I meant it. I allus did think Jotham a nice boy an' he'll be a great man out west, an' I told his mother so, but she won't be reconciled no way."

"Oh, Mrs. Garnsey, why don't you go out west?" asked Adeline. "It's such a fine country."

"Law, Addie, I couldn't do that. I've allus lived in Ravenna."

"But it's a great place for women; there are so many men, there aren't half enough women to go around. You'd be spoke for before you'd been there three months."

"Law, Addie, how foolish you are!"

"No, in earnest, Mrs. Garnsey. Any man might be glad to get you."

"Law, Addie, I'm maybe not so young as you think."

"A woman that can knit a pair of woollen socks in two days is a prize."

"Law, Addie, I can't do that day in and day out, but only now and then. I knit pretty fast,—yes, just as fast as any other woman, and as smooth. But what do I want of a husband?"

"Oh—to pile wood, to be sure, and lock the door nights."

"I jes' can't help it, but I think I'll live an' die in Ravenna. I told Mis' Collins Ravenna was good enough for her an' me, but let the boy go."

As time passed on and the Square let out no hint of his news, it was suspected to be of more than usual interest. The suspicion finally reached Grandmother's ears, we were honored with her company at dinner. When all were seated, and the blessing had been asked, he broke the silence usual to the time of carving with several ahems—a sign that he was ready to begin.

"Deacon, have you heard the news?"

"What?"

"About Leroy Nixon?"

"No, what's happened?"

"You know yes'day was a dull day?"

"So it was," said Grandmother quickly, chafing under prospect of one of the Square's long stories.

"Looked kind o' like rain, didn't it Mis' Lee?" Grandmother nodded and he went on. "The boys couldn't work in the hay-field, so Leroy an' that dwarf Biggs took their guns an' went to the river to see what they could shoot. But they had no business to be wastin' their time jes' killin' no-count animals, says I. When I was a boy they was allus suthin' to do on the farm, rainy days an' all. We had to ile up harness, an' wash the buggy, an' slick up the barn, an' chop fire-wood, an' pile stun, an' mend the rake, an' grind the scythes, an' make spiles for the sugar bush, or do suthin' useful."

"Hold on!" cried Grandmother, "or the rainy day'll be over and we won't know what happened."

"If those shif'less boys had been doin' that, the father o' one o' 'm wouldn't be buyin' a coffin today, an' tother in La'yer Miles's seein' how he could get 'im off from goin' to prison."

"But Square Bibbins, you haven't told. What happened? Hurry up!" came from all sides.

"Well,—at the foot-bridge,—right there where I crossed this mornin'—By jinks, Deacon! Don't seem possible," and the Square mopped his forehead with his red bandanna, "but there was the spots o' blood—Yes, yes, women folks is cur'ous—well—Biggs, he was jes' gettin' through the fence an' his gun went off right into Leroy's side. Mebbe't did an' mebbe't didn't, I don't know. Don't nobody know 't I can see. 'Taint as 'twas in my day—what 'ith their canals, an' their railroads an' their new-fangled notions aint nobody hardly good's their word. Used to be folks was jes' folks, now—

highty-tighty!" and the Square's fork, well baited with corn beef, flourished his misanthropy in the very noses of his hearers — "Besides, the Biggses are a harum-scarum set anyway."

Everybody had stopped eating, but no one offered to interrupt the old man again.

"Leroy, he screamed, an' they both screamed, but Biggs he had to stop an' go an' tell the Colonel. I allus knew that dwarf Biggs 'ud come to it an' ye jes' give him enough rope!"

"If you don't hurry up and say what happened," cried Grandmother, "we'll think you know more than you're willing to tell."

"Oh, no, no, no. Well, they got Leroy home someway, an' the doctor said right off he couldn't live, an' so he died—this mornin', five o'clock—I got the news on my way up."

"Poor young life—to be snuffed out like a candle!" sighed my mother; "and I'm sorry for the Biggs boy, too, I'm sure it was an accident."

"Mebbe so, mebbe not. He'd ought t' have been home helpin' his father."

"And how dreadful for Mrs. Nixon! he was her eldest boy."

"Yes, but she's got four left, an' they're enough to fill two houses," growled the old man. "In fact by the noise—you know I'm jes' next door—I sh'd say two's more'n enough."

"You're hard on the boys. They've got to make fun and a big to-do or they wouldn't be boys."

"Easy to see you never had any o' your own; you don't know what a rumpus it is day in an' day out."

"Ay, that's a sore spot in our lives," said the Deacon; "ours both died."

"Well, you can be glad you aint got 'em carousin' round pesterin' your days an' worryin' your nights."

"Poor Mrs. Nixon!" continued my mother, "I'm sorry for her, she can't help feeling it was so unnecessary. If he had only been in the field working, it wouldn't have happened."

"That's what I say," added the Square, "if she'd kept 'em to work—an' boys need work, it's the business of parents to set 'em at it—an' keep 'em at it."

"I wonder, Square Bibbins," asked my mother, "did you ever hear the story of two little boys whose grandfather died—their mother was talking to them about heaven—what a beautiful place it was, golden streets, and angels with white wings and long trumpets in their hands? 'And children, Grandpa is there.' "

" 'I'd like the white wings,' broke in one boy, 'I'd fly up to the moon.'

" 'I'd like the trumpet,' cried the other, 'and make a big noise, so's they'd all look round and say, "What's that?" '

" 'Well, you must be good boys,' said the mother, 'and then you'll go where Grandpa is.'

" 'I guess we don't want to go there,' said the eldest boy slowly.

" 'Why?' asked the astonished mother, 'why don't you want to go to that beautiful place?'

" 'Grandpa'll be there, and as soon as he sees us he'll say, 'Whew! Whew! boys, what you here for?' "

Passing the story by without remark, Square Bibbins turned to my father.

"Deacon, have you ever heard the facts about Father Steele and the Bishop—over at Bangall?"

Father Steele was a Methodist living across the river and known throughout the valley for his loud prayers, his fervent interjections, and the power that laid him

prostrate in the aisle during revival seasons. He had purchased a farm that reached almost to the Bangall tavern, noted for its noisy quarrels. He had built a big white house, where with his six sons he began an influence for industry and sobriety and even for quiet except where their devotions were concerned. Indeed, his son Abner praying on one hilltop could be heard across the river on still nights.

They with others of like turn of mind used to meet and hold service in the school-house, and when this grew too small, it was Father Steele who said, "We'll have a meeting-house of our own." He gave the land himself and most of the money, and at last the building was up and ready to be dedicated.

"I have heard nothing in particular," said my father in answer to the Square's question, "only most of the men have left sitting in the tavern chairs."

"Well, Father Steele was about finishing his church——"

"Why do you call it Father Steele's church? It's to be a Methodist church, isn't it?"

"Yes, he's a Methodist, but he gives the land and most of the money, why shouldn't it be his church?"

"A church is God's house and is cared for by a board of trustees; it——"

"Ho! Ho! that's your church; it's not the Methodists, no sirree! And there was a row last night in Bangall an' it wan't in the tavern either. It was the Bishop and Father Steele."

"What? The Bishop and Father Steele quarreling?"

"Yes, they were, Deacon! and this is the how of it. Last night was the time appointed for dedicating the building. It wan't quite done, but as everything had been paid for they wanted to begin gettin' the use of it; so the Bishop was called.

"He came about five o'clock, had supper with Father Steele, and went into the class-room to finish up some kind of legal rigamarole jes' before the hour set for openin' the meetin'.

"The choir was through their last practice, an' was sittin' quiet in the gallery. The fire in the stoves had been burnin' two hours, an' when half-past seven came the candles were lighted in the new tin candlesticks hangin' from nails in the wall. The teams that came in from the farms had made a reg'lar circle round three sides o' the house, and the slips were pretty nigh filled.

"Everythin' bein' so new an' nice there was a kind o' awe on everybody, an' they didn't even whisper.

"They was jes' waitin' to see the Bishop come in. Hadn't anybody in Bangall ever seen a Bishop, an' none o' 'em knew what he'd be like. Some said he'd be dressed up like a woman in her night-gown. I take it most folks' came to see that. Half an hour after time for openin' an' folks got kind o' restless in their seats. One man kept pilin' wood into the stove 'cause he hadn't nothin' else to do. It got hot an' women threw off their shawls an' the babies went to sleep an' the men yawned.

"Half past eight an' no one in the pulpit. Then the choir sung all the verses of a long hymn an' stopped. No Bishop yet.

"At nine o'clock Father Steele appeared with the look he most gen'lly uses in business. You could 'a heard a pin drop. He jes' said, 'There won't be any dedication tonight,' an' turned an' went out.

"Then you can reckon there was a buzz. Everybody wondered an' everybody surmised, but nobody knew. Well, this mornin' early the Bishop he went, an' there hadn't anybody seen hide or hair o' him."

And the old man rested after his long story.

"Mercy, what you stopping for?" cried Grandmother, her head and silver ear-trumpet bent in direction of the Square. "You've only just begun."

"It was signin' papers or some such matter had to be done before the religious part. The Bishop—that's as I understand it—mebbe it's so, mebbe 't aint—I won't swear in on it before the law—I'm no more 'an mortal, take me at my best, Mis' Lee." But something must have warned him not to trifle with passions once roused, for almost immediately he shuffled on with the narrative:

"The Bishop he was writin'—'This here prop'ty belongin' to the Bishop o' New York——

"'Hold on!' says Father Steele, 'What's that you're sayin'?'

"'It's all right,' says the Bishop — 'It's nothin' but form.'

"'This here chapel yours? Not much! Who gave the land an' furnished the money?'

"'The other good people about here helped, didn't they?'

"'Oh, they worked when they'd nothin' else to do; an' farmers brought stun they were glad to get rid of; an' the painter came slack days. They haven't any hold on it to speak of.'

"'But it's the rule of the church, an' its only for law an' order, so to speak.'

"'Well, I won't give it to you anyhow?' said Father Steele. Folks say he made his family go without enough to eat so's the church could be dedicated without debt. Mebbe so, mebbe not, you can't believe all you hear in these unscrup'lous times. They say he's pretty well fixed. Folks say they both got madder 'an hornets—anyhow, the church wan't dedicated. An' it's goin' round now that Father Steele'll turn Wesleyan probably. Mebbe so, mebbe not."

CHAPTER VI.

The Sabbath.

The Sabbath was a day set apart. No necessary duty was neglected, the household was astir early—no time to lie abed or be lazy on the Day of the Lord—nevertheless, Sunday had a character all its own.

To be sure there were family prayers every morning, when Stephen and Ledyard came in from the barn and Polly from the kitchen, Grandmother and Aunt Betsy from their wing, and we all sat down with my father and mother and what uncles and aunts and cousins happened with us at the time, in the family sitting-room. The Bibles were passed, the chapter for the day was given out, and each one read his two verses in turn. At first Stephen, Ledyard, and Polly had much trouble piecing out their sentences, but their ambition was fired by being presented each one with his own book, his name written very plainly on the first page, and by dint of much help and patience and repetition and practice on the long words, they became after a time fairly intelligent readers.

But on Sunday morning a longer time was taken—a psalm, or chapter in Proverbs, or the Sermon on the Mount was read over a number of times, and then in concert until after a few weeks it could be repeated by any one.

Then came prayers, my father first, followed by other members of the family. My Grandmother sat next him, trumpet in hand, and when he was through she began. I well remember her stately words and solemn tone:

"Ever living, ever blessed Lord our God, and Jesus Christ thy son, who bust the bonds of sin and death on that first day of the week, the holy Sabbath morning."

The rest of the prayer as well as the beginning was in keeping with the dominant tone of her mind and manner.

When Stephen first came to our house, my mother asked him to go to church with us on Sunday morning.

"I'll go along home and see to mother and the old man," he had replied, "chop wood enough to last a week, and, if you please, I'd like five pounds of salt pork to take along."

So it had been weighed out and a pie-shaped piece of cheese, a loaf of bread, or pat of butter slipped in with it and all put in a bag which he slung over his shoulder, then he had climbed the hill back of the house and gone away to his Sunday.

The meeting began at half past ten in the morning, and each one had to hurry his particular duties, put the house in order, care for the live-stock, do the dairy-work, harness the horses and have the carriage at the door—all by a few minutes after ten o'clock.

The church was in the middle of a grassy square without shrub or tree to relieve its bareness. A plank platform in front reached from door to door, entrance to the two main aisles. Between the doors and at the opposite end was the pulpit, high above the slips, and reached by a winding stair shut in by doors with wooden buttons.

The churchyard was early filled with wagons, and a crowd of men, women, children, and hired help. Old ladies came in summer-time with turkey-tail fans of their own make and a bunch of odorous mint, and in winter with foot-stoves full of live coals from the kitchen fire, for though the two little box-stoves near the doors roared away briskly with their beech, maple, and hickory chunks, they failed to modify the reign of frost and cold.

After the first service came the Sunday-school, when the children could stretch their legs and jiggle comforta-

bly on the seats while they recited their verses, beginning with the second chapter of Matthew. There were always seven new verses, after which we said all we had learned before until the time was up.

After Sunday-school there was a short intermission. The men talked with their neighbors, looked after their horses in the shed back of the church, stood in the sun on cool days and in the shade in front on warm days, exchanging views on crops, the price of butter, or on how much money it was best to put in church repairs. The women chatted in friendly-wise around the stove inside when the weather demanded a fire—everywhere that healthy interest in one another's affairs fallen with us under the name of gossip into such disrepute as to run the danger of being lost in egoism.

Mother Boyd was sitting on a feather cushion in a corner of her square pew one Sunday noon, toasting her feet over a warmer, and finishing a doughnut, when Jennet and her mother came up to inquire about Julia.

"Yes, she's bad again; the doctor came and with her father's help cupped the whole length of her spine. She hasn't raised her head since."

"Did you ever think," asked my mother, "that the doctors might yet find something to give so their patients wouldn't feel such dreadful pain? When a man is drunk you know he scarcely feels it if his leg is cut off."

"If they would only hurry—Julia suffers so! But see here, Jennet, I almost forgot you," and opening her big dinner-basket she took out a fat cookie, saying, "That's done with my new cutter—oak leaf—Henry brought it from Auburn when he came home from school."

"There goes the minister!" cried Jennet, and she and her mother hastily retired to their slip in the center of the church.

"Mother," whispered Jennet presently, "if one of those lamps ever break up there on the preacher's desk, would you get me a piece of that rain-bow glass that jiggles so when he pounds his fist?"

"H'sh!"

Jennet's glance, roaming listlessly, for she was getting sleepy, over the pews and windows and ceiling, suddenly came to life. It had fallen on the minister's scalp, which was moving down toward his eyebrows, then swiftly up and down again according to the thought. She tried "one, two, three, ready, go," and was delighted to find it would fit. Then she looked around to catch Joseph's eye, but he had been prudently seated next his Uncle Mathew with his Aunt Achsah and Adeline and Marcia between, and was busily counting the bubbles of paint dried on the seat in front. Keeping time with her rhythmic phrase, which she softly tapped out on the cover of her Bible, her head gradually sank on her mother's shoulder and she fell asleep almost without knowing.

Opposite the pulpit sat the choir in double rows, bass and tenor, air and second. The leader played the violin, one of Jennet's aunts accompanying on the bass-viol, and beside these there was a flute. The Presbyterians had long left behind that stage of intolerance through which the Baptists were then passing, and music had free way in the service.

The afternoon meeting was now over, and the people getting home hurried dinner. While the horses were being stalled and fed in the barn the table was spread with pork and beans from the oven or cold meat left over from Saturday's roast with potatoes warmed over, pie, coffee and pickles. The meal was soon ready and appetites sharpened by two sermons, the drive, the late hour, and

the prospect of another drive and sermon yet to come, as quickly took it off again.

Now came the time for reading the "New York Evangelist" and "Missionary Herald," the "Female Guardian," or a nap on the lounge. This was a dull time for Jennet if Aunt Betsy was away. The Sunday afternoon following the discussion of the album quilt she would stand looking out of the south window or run to swing on the gate, her face always in the one direction until at last she saw something stirring down by the triple-bodied elm. A second glance assured her it was Aunt Betsy, and away she flew, hair, arms, and apron-strings on the breeze.

"What made you stay so long? I was just lonesome for you. I got the Pictorial Bible the way I always do on Sunday and looked at the pictures, but they aren't nice unless some one tells them to me. Then I combed mother's hair and braided it all over till she said every hair in her head was loose, and now I've looked and looked for you. What made you stay so long?"

"I went to meeting this morning, and this afternoon I stayed with Granny Locke so Becky could go. I'm afraid the old lady can't live long."

"Why don't you make her well, Aunt Betsy?"

"I'm only a poor old ignorant woman, Jennet."

"But you make us well. You have us drink sage tea and you put goose oil and a woollen cloth on my neck and I get well. Say, I'd rather have the woollen cloth than the cold one mother puts on. I'll tell you what, Aunt Betsy, you be right there with the red woollen before mother comes and she'll never make you take it off. I heard her say to that hydropathy man how she cured me right up with cold water, and now I suppose I'll have it all the time 'cause it's queer; but I don't care, the red woollen's just as good and a lot more comfortable—you tell her it's just as good, Aunt Betsy. Oh, I remem-

ber Granny Locke, she gave me six raisins when I was down there with you. You must do something for her."

"But I haven't any medicine that will make an old woman well when her time comes to die. We all have to go some time."

"Let's walk down to the river and dig roots and things. We could go right now."

"I'm too tired, and besides it's Sunday."

Dear old Aunt Betsy! I fear if the youngsters of today should see you in that poke bonnet of dark blue silk with only a few folds of the same for trimming on the outside and a white silk lining within, though the dear old wrinkled face and faded blue eyes shone with the light of good will and ready self-sacrifice, I'm afraid they would laugh and nudge each other to look at the queer old woman in her alpacca dress with no gore, or plait, or flounce, a round cape of the same coming to the waist, a pair of cotton gloves, and a long black bag drawn up with a string, on her arm, where she carried her silver-bowed spectacles, her handkerchief, and a few raisins or lemon-drops to slip in any small hand that came near hers.

Sunday evening and the carriage was again brought to the door. This time Jennet and the old ladies stayed at home. What was there in that little mean, square, ugly meeting-house that it could so easily govern the conduct of the community and draw the tithe of their substance, that could hold their tired bodies on hard benches during four long sessions and make them thankful for the privilege? It was because, humble and mean though it might be, it was the shrine of an ideal beside which substance, nay even life itself, is but a watch in the night.

I can still see the rows of square pews running against the walls on three sides. Judge Barak Miles sat just

yonder, with his boys, the envy of youthful Ravenna, for in the pantry off his kitchen stood a bowl of copper and silver change, where any one in this favored family might help himself. And such good use did they make of their opportunities that later on there was nothing in the bowl, and no way to get anything in.

The owner of the next pew was Mr. Richly, an undersized, deliberate person, important in the village as he made the coffins for the dead, saw to it they were properly placed before the pulpit, opened and shut the lids in the church when the public filed in a long procession to take their last look, and lifted up any child too short to get a good view. Nobody found fault with him but Old Phoebe Wilson, and she was well known to be half crazy. No one ever could make out why she kept saying in her last sickness, "If Sam Richly makes my coffin I'll kick the foot-board out! see if I don't," though no matter was more frequently canvassed at the Mite Society days when Mrs. Richly wasn't there.

Next sat Old Colonel King, reaching away back of the Declaration of Independence. He was in such demand for Fourth of July celebrations that had he lived in a commercial era he must have made a fortune. But no thought of exploiting his patriotism for the good of his pocketbook had ever occurred to his simple mind. He had come to Ravenna in the first years of the century, had been, with true Yankee thrift, a farmer by day and a cobbler by night till easy circumstances gave him leisure to expand to his heart's content the theme of the good old days when man thought only of duty, God, and country.

In one corner was a thin, erect, grey-headed man beside a tiny woman in big round spectacles, both nearly eclipsed in winter by a yellow muff the size of a bushel basket. In spring when they came out from their barricade it

was always a surprise to find them quite ordinary looking. Jennet spoke of their boy—to herself of course—as "the little son of a muff." It almost seemed to her as if that might be calling names, and she thought of what must happen to the one who should say to his brother, "Thou Fool." She was very careful never to think fool at the same time she was thinking of little Thomas Quivey, though he did say every Sunday to his teacher, "I learned the seven verses but I can't say but four," and then boo-hooed, poor little son of the muff!

The pew opposite belonged to Uncle Ben Kinsmore; fat, round, rosy, and never at home unless in his shirt sleeves. Though Sunday with its high stock and stiff boots was no doubt a trial to Uncle Ben, the thought of shirking never occurred to him. As regularly as Sunday came he could be heard squeaking to his seat, and blowing his nose vigorously from time to time on his white pocket handkerchief.

In Mr. Ives' slip the children ran up like a pair of stairs. Among them was the little Statira, half hidden by a post that supported the gallery, passing the time of a long sermon by pricking the initials of her name on the blank leaf of a hymn book. Once she put the pin in her mouth just as her mother spied the wicked work and gave her a fearful nudge. Down her throat slid the pin. She begged to go outside and cough it up, but "Sit still and behave" was her only answer. Her eyes filled with tears as she thought of her sin.

"I shall die, mother, I shall die. I know I shall. Please let me go out, I'll come right back."

"Look at the minister and be still; you've done mischief enough for one day," said the Puritan mother.

Poor Statira tried to prepare her mind for meeting the Great Judge, but could think only of the pin slipping down, down—wondering when it would reach her heart.

On one of the Ives steps stood a pair of twins, Jasamine and Geraldine, so much alike they couldn't be told apart. They were the only twins in the valley and everybody felt a personal pride in calling strangers' attention to them. They were always together, always dressed alike, and never thought of themselves but as the one or the other little twin. As one stood alone in front of the house one morning a lady passing said:

"What's the matter? How do you happen to be alone?"

"Oh, ma'am, I'm the good little twin, out taking a walk, the other is naughty and sits upstairs on a chair."

The cholera that swept this section with such fearful desolation in 1849 took our twins. They sickened and died one day apart. We buried them in one grave and the whole village mourned.

Then there was Deacon Boyd, his hands resting on his gold-headed cane, unless the heat or cold demanded a liberal use of his silk pocket handkerchief. But the fairest sight to the children was Mother Boyd and her big dinner-basket full of cakes and cookies, pears and apples for any who came her way.

My father sat in the center of the house, stern, grave, a very pillar of the church. But the tired body would get the better of the will and his head would nod, nod right toward the minister. Then catching himself he would strain his eyes wide open, looking straight ahead as if nothing had happened.

Two seats ahead was Mr. Enderley, the young deacon who teetered on his toes whenever he talked or prayed in meeting. He spoke very fast and his voice, rising and falling with his teeter, was like the hum of bees or murmur of a distant waterfall.

Dear old friends! Gone, all gone, only the youngest of the children left, the grandparents of today. One

by one you have lain down to sleep the last sleep. The dust of years covers your bones and lays its obscuring mark on your very names. Truly your foibles were few and your virtues many. Ay, the poetry of old age is—when I was a child.

CHAPTER VII.

Granny Garnsey.

On the outskirts of the village to the north, in what had once been a doctor's office, lived old Granny Garnsey. The hovel without paint, the yard without tree or shrub or vegetable or fence, told well enough her miserable estate. Almost any day the passer-by could see her shapeless form bent double over some little pile of firewood, her scant calico skirt flapping in the wind, a shawl tied over her head, her hands pinched and red with cold. Winter or summer, the business of life with Granny Garnsey lay in arranging and rearranging, here and there about the yard, the piles of fuel which the good people of the place saw to it she should never be without. Perhaps some perverted feminine instinct, seeking backgrounds and pretty vistas, wrought in these piles as, in others, it works in flowers and shrubbery, and living green.

The expressionless face, sharp nose, pale eyes of quavering blue with their shadows of disappointment and grief, the whole set in a mould of stubborn endurance, you could read there the hard sentence life had passed on her—husband dead, daughter dead, and sons who had despised and forsaken her.

One room, barely furnished, served her domestic needs —a stove that like its mistress had grown rheumatic from exposure, a high-post bed, a stand with claw feet on which were her Bible, spectacles, and candlestick, a small mirror from whose upper third ladies in high powdered hair, and skirts of brocade hung over tremendous hoops, looked out in gentle surprise at their surroundings, a

few dishes on the pantry shelf if the door happened to fly open, and in one corner a dark wooden chest.

No one in the village knew what was in the chest. Once when I had taken her a basket of provisions I ventured to say:

"My Aunt Deborah has a chest just like yours, Mrs. Garnsey."

"Yes, Jennet, most every house has one."

"But ours hasn't."

"Most likely your mother gave it to one of her sisters when she was married—Lydia or Marcia—they went from your house."

"My aunt let me see what was in hers. There were pretty quilts she had pieced, and the things she had worn on her wedding day, a high-back tortoise shell comb, her silk long-shawl with fringe on the ends, and her bead bag." I paused a moment, but she didn't say anything, and I went on:

"In the till was a bunch of artificial roses and sometimes she puts them in her glass candlesticks on the mantel." Then I waited again, but no artifice tempted her love to talk, and the chest with its mystery was closed to the public for many years.

In her high-backed wooden rocking-chair she sat by the stove in winter, and by the window in summer, and looked out on the happy families riding by; men hurrying to work that was sure to bring reward; children, dinner-basket in hand, loitering on the way; ladies dressed in their best passing to the afternoon tea or the merry sewing-circle, or the old couple from the Lower Village in their two-wheeled caleche. She had plenty of time for comparison, she—with nothing to have and nothing to do and no one to be glad at her coming. But she never complained of her lot, or wondered why Providence had taken her husband and children and property. She sel-

dom referred to her happier days, and then only to dwell on its joyful side, and to take a kind of feeble pride in her husband's family, by which she nourished the self-respect no indigent circumstances could take from her.

The price received for her hillside acres had paid for the bit of land on which she lived, and left a small surplus in the hands of the village merchant. On this she had drawn for necessities until it was gone, sometimes in comfort, sometimes in well-concealed privation.

When winter approached, the men of the church appointed a day for the "wood bee" that should supply her with fuel for the season. Some drew the logs, some chopped these to stove-length, and others split kindling. For the next few days she would be busy making it into numerous little piles against the house or fence, and about the yard. A week later and these piles would all have changed places. This mania was for years a kind of public benefit in Ravenna. When other conversation ran out and the silence threatened to be uncomfortable, "And how about Granny Garnsey?" one would ask. "Is she still piling wood? Do you know, I never could make out what ails that woman, could you?" And then would follow one of Aunt Betsy's remarks: "She's a leetle bit derangey, I take it—just a leetle derangey," after which conversation usually got on its legs again.

There were things went on in the little cottage of Granny Garnsey not approved of by the good housekeepers of Ravenna, and as she had no means of livelihood save as kindly disposed persons remembered her with stores of provisions, the neighbors at length declared the best place for her was in the county-house, and the poormaster was advised to come for her.

Every one thought this an arrangement for her comfort—every one except the poor woman herself, who flew into a rage, fought with all the valor of her tongue, dared

the poormaster to show his face inside her door, screamed she would never go—she'd die first.

This outburst on the part of the meek woman whose constant refrain in company was, "I think just so," alarmed the good people of Ravenna. "Let her alone," they said, and apples, potatoes, and meat were again dropped at her door, and the "wood bee" called into service.

And after that if the county-house ever by chance loomed on the horizon of the conversation, a spot of color would rise in her cheek, a wrathful fire kindle in her eye, and her whole body quiver with anger.

"Thank the Lord," she would say, "I have a place of my own that nobody can set me out of. The poor-house is good enough for folks that haven't any home. I'm not reduced to that."

There were about half a dozen houses in the village open for her to visit whenever she liked. Here she would go for the day and could be sure of a well-filled basket when she went home. It was a matter of course that she should wipe the dishes after dinner, and pick up the stocking in process of knitting; but the thought still rankled in the minds of a few that the shabby old woman might do for herself—she was well and strong—or go to the alms-house. The trouble was no one wanted such help as the poor inefficient old woman could give.

But she had one staunch friend. Mrs. Jeremiah Dix never forgot the time Johnnie died of the cholera—how friends shunned the house and sent inquiries only by the doctor—how Granny Garnsey had come with her basket as if for one of her periodical visits, and had baked and washed and scrubbed till it was over. Why, I don't doubt the poor soul, shabby, incapable, and even a "lettle bit derangey," had looked to her much like an angel from heaven. And through the long years when they were growing old together there was never a tale

of misery, of suffering, or hunger, never a storm, or high wind, but Mrs. Jeremiah Dix would wonder how it was going in Granny Garnsey's cottage, and post some one off with a basket of good things.

One cold raw night, when the snow was piling high around the doors, filling the paths, and making a chair in the corner by the kitchen fire the most desirable spot on earth, Mrs. Jeremiah, her supper work over, set a pan of apples on the table, put some shelled corn in the popper, took up her knitting, and settled herself for a quiet evening. Just then Henry, a boy of twelve, came blustering in, shaking the snow from his comforter, stamping his feet, grumbling about the cold, and blowing on his fingers, which had been almost frozen in spite of the woollen mittens. He pulled the "New York Weekly Tribune" from his pocket, flung it on the table, picked up an apple from the dish, which he held in his teeth while he sat down on the wooden settle behind the stove to draw off his wet boots.

His mother's fingers flew fast over the yarn and the needles rattled and clicked. The storm was rising, the snow beat hard against the glass, and the wind roared in the chimney. Mrs. Jeremiah sighed.

"It's a sad night for the poor and homeless, Henry."

"Now mother, Granny Garnsey's all right! Don't you begin to worry."

The wind grew stronger and whistled round the corners with the peculiar sound that means a temperature below zero. Sometimes a gust pushing under the window-frame rattled the leaves of the newspaper on the table.

"Yes, you'd better go, Henry. Think if she should be without food or fire!"

"I can't, mother, my boots are off. Tomorrow'll do."

"Do you remember how it feels to be hungry?"

"My feet are wet now going to the post-office. I never can pull on my boots when they're wet—I don't want to go."

"I'll help you get them on," and she went out first to fill the basket.

"I don't want to go, but if you say so, I suppose I'll have to."

Mrs. Jeremiah helped him on with his boots and cap and ear-muffs, comforter and mittens, and gave him a kiss to shame him on his reluctant way.

"There now, keep up courage, you won't be long; see there's wood in her box—carry in an armful anyway—maybe she can't get out in the morning for the snow. I'll have the corn ready when you get back and maybe some stirred sugar."

The trench where the path ran was full to the brim, the sharp flakes driven by a fierce wind scratched his cheeks and blinded his eyes, and feeling his way rather by sense than by sight the boy trudged on, nursing his bad feelings till at length he reached his destination. He knocked; no one answered.

"Mrs. Garnsey," he called. "It's Henry, Mrs. Garnsey; mother has sent you a basket."

Reassured by the familiar voice the old woman got out of bed and came to the door. The hinges grated harshly in the cold, the door creaked and snapped where the white frost had tried to bind it fast. At length she appeared, her candle shaded with one hand, throwing into wierd relief her white nightcap, and the ragged quilt wrapped about her scant shoulders.

"Oh!" he gasped in dismay, for she seemed more ghost than mortal, but before he could run away, as he had a mind to do, she had pulled him in and taken charge of the basket.

"Bless your good mother for thinking of me, and you

are a good angel too, coming out this wild night. I am hungry. I had gone to bed to try and forget, but your blessed mother——" The old woman was, however, quite unable to finish her sentence.

Henry had by this time forgotten his grievance and was filling the wood-box, stirring up the fire, fetching in a pail of water and whistling at the same time.

"Anything more I can do, Mrs. Garnsey?"

"God bless you, my boy! bless you! bless you!" followed him out into the snow and wind and storm. His light heart kept feet and hands and cheeks tingling, and it seemed no time till he was pulling off his wet boots again on the settle behind the kitchen fire.

Mrs. Garnsey was a faithful attendant at the Meeting-House on Sunday. She sat in the very back seat and gave the strictest attention. Her large poke bonnet was tied closely under her chin and over it hung a veil a yard long with great hand-embroidered flowers across the bottom. When the wind was cold and rough it was drawn over her face, but on reaching the church she folded it carefully back on the top of her bonnet, while its width hung down on either side. A shawl summer and winter served the double purpose of keeping her warm and hiding what was beneath from any too curious eye, and she had always a neatly folded pocket handkerchief that was never shaken out.

Meantime years had gone by; my parents had removed to a distant state, the neighbor opposite where she had so often warmed her feet and eaten her dinner had sold her house and gone to live with children. Other friends had grown old and passed away, and when Mrs. Jeremiah Dix died, in the very act of filling the time-honored basket, it seemed as if Granny Garnsey was to outlive all her generation. Again the poormaster went to advise her removal to the county-house. He described

the new building where she would have a warm, comfortable room, plenty to eat, and personal care when she needed it.

"You're older now than the law allows, Mrs. Garnsey. The Bible says three score and ten, and you're over eighty, now, ain't you?"

"Eighty-six come March."

"And the old friends are all gone."

"Ay, ay."

"Well, you think it over, and I'll come in again tomorrow morning," and he left without waiting for an answer.

And she did think it over—all day she thought and thought, sitting in her wooden rocker. Slowly the truth sunk into her mind. She was old. She must grow more feeble; even now she would rather do without the milk a neighbor offered than go to fetch it. Piling wood was a weariness, her rags were an apology for clothes, and her shawl, its respectability too was gone, while each year the wind found easier access under the decaying clapboards of the little cottage.

That night witnessed the fight of her life, but not with neighbors or county officials—no human eye saw the agony of the conflict.

"And I said I wouldn't ever go. Cold, and hunger, and loneliness for thirty years, all nothing! nothing! And I always intended to die in my own bed, and be buried by my husband and daughter; to be carried to the poorhouse to herd with the offscouring of the county! and be hustled into a pauper's grave!

> "'Rattle her bones over the stones,
> For she is a pauper whom nobody owns.'

that's what the children'll say."

She couldn't sleep, she couldn't cry, only a dull ache filled her whole body; then her thoughts turned to that Refuge where she so often had found relief. Surely He would not forsake her in her old age, He who is God to the widow and the fatherless." She crept to her knees and prayed:

"Make me willing, Father, make me willing to go. I know it is best. I know it is right. I am the last one left—the last one left. Thy will be done, Lord; I must be willing—I am willing!" Then peace came into her soul and she lay down and slept.

When daylight came, her mind was made up to go. She busied herself with the last preparations, put her scant wardrobe into a satchel and set it down by the door, so that if the summons came suddenly she might be ready. There was one last thing—to take farewell of what was in the chest. She had forced herself to accept pauper's food and pauper's shelter and the lonely æons in a pauper's grave, away from all she loved, but the chest must not be desecrated, it must be left behind.

She went over and raised the top; her heart almost failed, and her head dropped in her hands. Then brushing away her tears, "I will be brave," she said to herself, and sat down to say good-bye to all there was left of what life had once seemed to be. A coat with brass buttons—her husband had worn it as a militia officer, the long white plume yellowing with age, and the sword. So he had died. Then her daughter had died. She had never been herself since, she knew it. Then the losses, and her husband's proud cousin who had enticed her boys to the city—they never came back—the rare letters, and then the silence. She lifted the dress her little girl had last worn and the amber beads she had loved. She went to the high-backed rocker by the stove and sat down to think it out once more. Lovingly she smoothed out

the folds of the dress and fondled the yellow beads. One yearning cry escaped her:

"Daughter, daughter, if only you had lived! Some one to love me, some one to care for me!"

Her head leaned on the chair back, her hands loosened from their grasp, all was silence.

At ten o'clock the poormaster knocked. There was no answer. He lifted the latch and stumbled over the satchel. Granny Garnsey sat quite still in her chair, with her treasures in her lap. God had saved her in her need—she had escaped the poor-house.

CHAPTER VIII.

Bridget Donovan.

Just how Mike Donovan, an Irishman from Londonderry, dropped down in our unmixed American Ravenna, was a mystery. There was no railroad building within fifty miles, no canal being dug, no factories requiring hands other than those of the proprietor and his own sons. And when he died, shortly after, his wife was left with nothing but her brogue and two helpless children to attract the interest of a community whose manners and traditions and ideals were quite strange and new to her. But kindness is a language known the world over, and when the merchant of the Brick Store moved off an ell from a house belonging to him, made it weather-proof, painted it red, and gave it to the widow with a bit of land about it, Ravenna seemed to her another name for Paradise.

Behind the house fluttering in the wind was always a line of stockings and shirts, of sheets and pillow-cases. She was the village washer-woman, and eked out her little income by helping in her neighbors' kitchens during sickness or any special emergency. A good faithful independent worker, she was as useful and necessary as any member of the commonwealth. A healthy self-respect had the Widow Donovan, who felt herself no whit beneath her more prosperous neighbors. Their good fortune she enjoyed as if it had been her own, and their griefs too lay close to her heart.

Every Sunday morning, rain or shine, clean and dressed in their best, went Widow Donovan and her boys to church. Their beaming faces told what a gala-day it was, this doing nothing but sit still, visit in the

intermissions, with thought of the good dinner that waited at home.

And at the sociables and donation parties, though Bridget, it is true, stood in the kitchen washing dishes, she had given her mite and her services, and she too felt a kind of property in the swing of merriment that drifted back through the moving doors.

"The Lord be praised!" she would shout when word was passed each year that the village bachelor had donated ten dollars, or shake her head over the new milliner's gift of two lean old hens, muttering, "Who can understand his errors?"

The years had softened her brogue till few could have told her from a native of Ravenna. Quick, sympathetic, and imitative, she had fitted herself into the new surroundings as if she had been born to them. Only once was she known to refer to the unhappy past, which had driven her with so many others into the land of promise. That was when little Frankie Miles turned up his nose because the chicken was boiled instead of being stuffed and roasted.

"Little man," she said, "do you know there are folks so hungry they can't sleep nights for the pain in their innards? Why, I remember in Ireland when a lot of us turned over dung-hills to see if we couldn't find something to eat. This country, sir, is Paradise! An' if they aint a hell, they ought be, for such as find fault," and Bridget Donovan went back to her tub, leaving Frankie with eyes wide open and a great fear in his heart.

There was an old country habit still clinging to Bridget about which she evidently felt some delicacy — she smoked a stained clay pipe. How people knew this for sure, I can't say. She was never seen with it, she never spoke about it, and no one ever mentioned it to her. But it was a fact established in the village annals —

Widow Donovan smoked tobacco—therein was she set off, peculiar, and different among the Puritan folk of Ravenna who, accepting the fact with grief, took all the pains to conceal it one takes with a family error.

She had a personal interest in everybody. When the young man from the west came back to visit relatives, and left a bit of work with her, she was honored. Or when an old resident came home from the Black River country on Lake Ontario and brought her a bundle of fine clothes to do up, dropping a little gift in her hand for the sake of old times, life seemed bright indeed.

Her garden fence was covered with clematis, wild cucumber, and morning glories. Their bright leaves and gay blossoms hid the homely things that filled her cellar with winter cheer. A large evergreen tree stood close beside her door, and under its shade she would sit on summer afternoons in her Boston rocker, sewing and greeting with a cordial nod any acquaintance who chanced to cross the two planks that bridged the grass-covered ditch between her door and the road. The hearty good-will in her voice when she passed the time of day spoke for her blithe temperament, and called out a corresponding mood of hope and courage, so that everyone felt a trifle happier for having seen the Widow Donovan.

At last she grew old and feeble and dropped down in stature. The line of clothes at the back door swung less often and finally dwindled to little more than the black cord stretching from post to post. Her children had grown up now, and looked after her wants as she had done so many years for theirs. "This is life for a king!" she would say, beaming on them, and, though her muscles were withered and her face seamed, her spirits, blossoming on in hope and thanksgiving, set their stamp on the community.

CHAPTER IX.

JENNET.

(1) THE RED STOCKINGS.

"I DON'T like those red stockings! I don't like 'em!" Jennet's voice was hard and she scowled at her clothes which were lying ready for her on the chair.

"Why, my dear, those are nice new stockings," said her mother in gentle tones. "I want you to put them on because this afternoon you are going to wear your turkey red dress. They will look so nice with it, and we will go up to see Aunt Lucia."

"I don't like 'em!" insisted Jennet. "The girls at school all point at 'em and say, 'Look there!' " and Jennet dropped to the floor and buried her face amid a shower of tears.

In the corner of the kitchen stood the hand-loom, and Aunt Betsy, hearing the beloved child, got off the high bench on which she was sitting, came forward, and stooped low to whisper something in her ear. The crying ceased, the face cleared, and the little brown head with its tangle of curls lifted to the old lady with a tender look in the dark eyes.

She put on the red stockings and laced her shoes with leather strings so stout they never broke. She ate her breakfast of bread and milk, her hair was combed, she brought in a pan of chips from the near wood-pile and put it under the stove to dry, then a few sticks of wood were dropped in the box behind and her work was done. It was now eleven o'clock and Jennet had gone again and again to the old woman weaving at the loom and whispered, "Is it time?"

At last Aunt Betsy drew the shuttle out slowly, beat up the yarn with a bang of the lathe, pushed back the bench on which she was sitting, and looked out of the window with her hand shading her eyes to judge the height the sun had gained in the sky.

"I think it's nigh eleven o'clock," she remarked, as she took down a sun-bonnet from a nail in the wall. Jennet's was already in her hand. A tin cup and pail were found, and the two started across the fields of newly mown hay. The air was sweet with its fragrance, the robins were chirping a gay song, a lone quail from a safe retreat among the briar bushes was piping a call to its mate who whistled an answer from the hill, and the golden sunlight filled earth and air with life and the joy of being.

At the foot of a little rise of ground Jennet bent over, pushed back the leaves and cried, "I've found one! such a big red one! See the first strawberry this year! Must I throw it over my shoulder, Aunt Betsy, for luck? Stephen says you must."

"Sho', that's just one of Stephen's notions."

Both bent low over the ground, pushing aside the clover blossoms, and the yellow buds of the sheep sorrel, hunting for scattered clumps of berries, and when they lay fair to the sun the scarlet fruit hung large and juicy, each with its crown of green petals, as Aunt Betsy's hand dropped them in the pail.

Jennet had been dancing around, chattering like a bird at dawn, and now when she saw how few there were in her cup while Aunt Betsy's pail was nearly full, her face dropped and a deep scowl drew a line between her brows. Suddenly a bright thought dawned on her. She would pour her berries into the pail, and then she could say, "See! Aunt Betsy, and I picked 'em." Happy child, if only when you are a woman you can sight as

quick a remedy when you see friends in fairer places than your own—if when others succeed and you fail, you can yet say, "All things work together for my good—I shall see by and by."

There was a slight embankment running along the bottom of the high hill which had once been a canal carrying water to a distillery on the farm below and to the grist-mill at the village. Here they sat down to rest and talk and hull the berries.

"What's this little hill for, Aunt Betsy? Is it the big one's foot? There's its head up among the trees that stand right against the clouds. Can't we go up there, some day? We could touch the sky and see what it's made of. Has the hill got a name? Aunt Lucia said the hill back of her house was the Old Colonel's Hill, because it once belonged to old Colonel King."

"This hill used to belong to Bildad Benson, before your father bought it. You could call it Benson's Top."

"I don't like that," said Jennet. "But we could call it Old Ben, or Uncle Ben, just as if Uncle Ben were a man with candy or an orange. Don't you see, Uncle Ben has kicked out his foot and covered it with strawberries, and up under his shoulder on that little hill is a patch of blackberries all in blossom now. I like Uncle Ben. And there is the lane that leads from the house up the hill to the pasture where the cows walk so slow, just like you. There's peppermint there and little green cheeses, and sorrel in most every fence corner. They're all good to eat. Did you know that, Aunt Betsy? And on the other side is the big pile of stones and two pine stumps turned bottom upwards. Cousin Joseph says they look just like a castle when you're a little way off. There are the towers standing high and the square keep in the middle, like Uncle Tucker said, and little roofs and chimneys sticking out everywhere. I never saw a

castle, but I guess Joseph did—in Boston. They have everything in Boston, Joseph says. And there's a story, Aunt Betsy, about Alonzo and Imogene, who lived in a castle. Do you know that story?"

"No, but your mother sings a song about them."

"Oh, good! and does she sing about the worms when the knight took off his helm—is that what you call it? But there's father and the boys going home to dinner. Did you hear the dinner-horn? I guess Polly didn't blow it hard, don't you?"

(2) THE PLAID DRESS.

AUNT BETSY had been busy in the fall making ready a piece of plaid flannel for Jennet's new winter dress. The brown yarn was colored with butternut shucks, madder made the red, and the dye-tub behind the kitchen stove, where she wrung out skeins of yarn each morning and shook them in the wind, gave the indigo blue.

Jennet had watched the process of spinning, coloring, warping, and weaving, and when the plaids first came to view she didn't like them; they were not so pretty as the stripes in the dress she was wearing with their colors bright and varied as the rainbow. But she said nothing of her dislike until it came from the woollen mill where it had been sent to be pressed. This gave it a smooth finish that would last a long time, a touch of elegance where the clothes of most children were made up straight from the loom. She looked and looked, and at last cried out:

"I don't like it! I don't like it!"

"You ought to be glad to have such a nice warm dress; there are little girls that have nothing but old clothes," said her mother.

But this reflection on the uneven distribution of goods failing to make the plaid any prettier in Jennet's eyes,

her mother continued: "Think how hard Aunt Betsy has worked and so long to spin and weave it. It isn't kind to her not to like it."

At this Jennet burst into tears. She hated the plaid, but she loved dear old Aunt Betsy and couldn't bear to hurt her feelings. When grief could no longer flow in tears she ran to her grandmother's room. There she was sure of sympathy, and something good to eat as well.

The old lady had just finished her dinner and was rocking a few minutes in her chair before putting the things away.

"What's the matter, Jennet? You've been crying."

"I just hate that new plaid for my dress, I just hate it! Do you like it, Grandma?"

"To tell the truth, I don't. You ought to have some of that pretty delaine they have at the Brick Store. Your father can afford it and you ought to be dressed as well as the best in the town. But cheer up. I have something for you, a nice cup of green tea and a piece of apple pie seasoned with rose butter. Your mother doesn't like you to drink tea, so I'll make it weak, but it'll be good, and there's nothing like tea when one's out of sorts," and handing her the cup she said, "There, drink that while I clear the table and wash the dishes.

"And now, Jennet, let's see what you know. You've got beyond b, a, ba; b, i, bi; b, o, bo; b, u, bu; but can you spell baker?"

"I don't like to spell, anyway, Grandma."

"That reminds me, I saw you scratch your head last night, Jennet. You go to that district school where all the rag-tag and bob-tail go, and it's no wonder. If I had my way you should go to some nice select school where you would learn manners and be fit to go with me sometime to see your relatives in New York City.

"Well, we'll see; you bring the cricket to my chair," and Grandmother Lee took a white cloth from the bureau drawer and seated herself in the splint-bottomed rocker with the child on the cricket at her feet. She gently untangled the brown curls, removed the snarls, and, notwithstanding the ohs and ows, held firmly to her work, passed the fine-tooth comb back and forth over hear head, and finally drenching the hair in camphor, exclaimed, "There!"

Then Grandmother tied on a clean apron, put on her silver-bowed spectacles, took her sewing and went out to the family sitting-room.

"Jennet, I'm thirsty; will you get me a drink of water?" Jennet went to the well and brought a tumbler of fresh water; then she began stringing some beads.

"Jennet, you bring me a pillow-case from the press. I'm using black thread and I can't see to get it through the needle without a white cloth." The pillow-case was brought, and again she began on the beads, having troubles of her own with knots and holes too small for the needle.

"Jennet, don't you want to run around to my room and in the little drawer of my bureau at the right hand you'll find a cake of bees'-wax? My thread doesn't act right."

Jennet wouldn't show reluctance, but her spirit rebelled against the form of asking the favor. She thought her grandmother might say, "Are you willing to go," and not "Don't you want to?" "I don't want to go," she said to herself, "but I will because—because it wouldn't be nice not to."

"Sister Peck," said Grandmother, when Jennet was out of the room, "why in the world didn't you make a prettier check for Jennet's new flannel? You know she likes bright colors, and that madder!—it's only fit for clothes in the poor-house. Why didn't you get cochineal

for the red?" She scarcely waited for a reply; indeed, didn't expect one.

Aunt Betsy took off her spectacles and wiped them carefully while Grandmother continued:

"If she must wear a home-made cloth dress it should be as pretty as possible. Her gold beads I brought from Philadelphia don't show off well top of a homely dress."

"Achsah and I talked it over and we thought a golden brown would be nice for the main color." But Grandmother, full of her subject, could wait for no more.

"Achsah, a new delaine dress from the Brick Store would look well on Jennet. There is a small flowered pattern that would look especially well. By the way, did you see Tommy Tuthill's new wife at the oyster supper? She wore a very handsome Paremetta dress with big red and yellow figures on a brown background, and they said she wore a gold chain around her neck with something on it in a little pocket—a watch, I suppose. I saw them worn when I was in New York City."

"Probably a gift from Mr. Tuthill," said Adeline. "But, Achsah, how did you like her?"

"I think she will be a great help in our society. She's from Massachusetts and no doubt capable."

"But do you think she'll be good to Hester?" asked Grandmother.

"Of course she will, Hester's such a nice little girl, and I'm glad she's to have a mother at last."

"Achsah, are you going to get Jennet a new store dress?" pursued Grandmother, not to be shaken from her purpose. "Mathew can afford it, and you ought to dress her decently."

"I don't want her to be vain and she's dressed as well as the children of our neighbors now. I don't want her to think herself better than her playmates even if her father can afford it."

"She'll look like Hagar in a dress made from that new flannel! Yes, like Hagar in the wilderness!" and the old lady gathered up her work and started for her own rooms. The hall-door slammed hard, but as she was deaf, perhaps she didn't know.

"Tell about the party you went to last night," asked my mother.

"Oh, it wasn't anything much—only those five girls from Greene. They were invited because Jo King is having one of his attacks and it's Sally Jenks from Greene this time. But the funny thing was that every one of them had a piece of black court plaster somewhere on her face or neck."

"Why, dear me, they couldn't all have had a burn or pimple?"

"Gals, gals," warned Aunt Betsy, "if you would have friends, you must show yourselves friendly."

"That's all right, Aunt Betsy, they're in fashion and we're out. I suppose they think it makes their complexion white by contrast; or else it might be to bring out a dimple. All our girls noticed it and talked about it. Oh, yes, and when they were taking off their things in the spare room they began bragging over their petticoats. One had on six and another nine—starched stiff as anything; I suppose another would have had at least thirteen if supper hadn't been ready just then. The supper was fine, but I came home early, so I can't tell much about it."

"Alanson not being there, I suppose it was dull. Jennet, run and see what time it is."

"Shall I go to the south door-step and look at the noon-mark?"

"Bless the child! A noon-mark is for noon. No, go look at the clock: it must be nearly time for supper.

By the way, Adeline, what is that all wrapped up in tissue paper on your bureau?"

"I'll let you see," and leaving the room she came back in a few minutes bringing a fan sparkling with a thousand silver spangles. The sticks were of carved ivory and the fan itself unfolded a garden scene where gayly dressed ladies were dancing under tall trees lost to everything but love and pleasure—it might well have come from the hand of Watteau.

"Alanson! Alanson!" cried everybody. "Did it come from New Orleans?"

The owner's cheeks flushed.

Grandmother now came back with a skein of yarn for some one to hold. "Here, Jennet, you aren't doing anything," and then she spied the fan.

"Where did that come from? How beautiful! How perfect!" and her voice took on the softened tone it always had when she handled exquisite things. She held it, admired it, stroked it softly with a light hand, and said, "When you refused young Merchant's invitation to the Donation party at Platter, I said to Betsy, 'She'll have to look out or she'll go through the woods and take up with a crooked stick at last,' but I see it's all right, and I'm glad of it. Alanson is a fine young man with a good business head, and you'll make him a sensible wife. But see here, Jennet, 'Time's a headstrong hoss'—Where are you, child?"

Holding the yarn for Aunt Betsy was merely to stand up, stretch out your arms, and the yarn would run off smooth and easy. But it was different when Grandmother wound the ball. The threads would catch together, then a quick shake of the skein that would straighten things out for a moment; then a second and third knot with more and more violent jerks until it was all in a snarl. She would pick away at it patiently at

first, then pull angrily and snap the skein, all to no purpose. And when she put the ball between the threads the mix-up only got worse till the snarl crept into her temper. Looking out of the window just then she saw Jo King riding by.

"What a mean thing he is to be riding in a sulky!" and she gave another vigorous pull. "I must say a young man never looks so well as with a handsome young lady by his side."

"Don't be hard on him," laughed Adeline, "he'd be glad enough to have Sallie Jenks."

(3) A VISIT TO AUNTIE DWIGHT'S.

In the long summer evenings, when the birds were still and the insects, and there was only the croak of the frogs in the marsh beyond the orchard, we used to gather about the front door, sitting on the two stone steps or on chairs under the trees, my father in his shirt sleeves after the hard day. This was the time for talk and jest and neighborhood news.

Then I would run after fireflies, or hide among the shrubbery, or scurrying through the billowy tops of the may-weed make believe I was some storm-tossed sailor swimming for my life. My mother's call, "Jennet, come in the house," was the shoal on which my pleasure boat nightly came to grief, for even if some one did read me to sleep it wouldn't be with the Scottish Chiefs or Robinson Crusoe, but something about Madame Guyon, or the Diary of Hester Ann Rogers.

Occasionally the dread hour was put off. An errand would take my mother to the house next below, and she usually let me go along. I sat very still while they discussed candle-dipping, or the pattern-stripe in a wool carpet Auntie Dwight was going to weave. Then sometimes there would be a glass of root beer brewed for a

summer tonic, or a basket of ripe apples, for hers ripened sooner than ours. But even this conversation, full of interest as it was, couldn't keep my head from falling into my mother's lap, where I was soon fast asleep.

Then the shaking! and the words, "Wake up! Wake up!" and the dragging of unwilling feet homeward—poor Madame Guyon seemed preferable to that.

Auntie Dwight was a short thin little body in a calico dress, with a cape of the same and a bit of white around her neck. Her grey hair was pulled back tightly under a close fitting cap, and her pale blue eyes were sunk in wrinkles. Her voice was far away, as if it had been beaten about by the wind before reaching you, and her hands were hard and furrowed and ugly with keeping her house, and working day in and day out at the loom weaving rag carpets for the neighbors.

Sometimes in the afternoon I was allowed to go by myself and stay to supper with her. I carried my blocks of calico to sew over and over, and when I got to work Auntie Dwight would unroll her bundle to show me pieces of 'Lowizie's' and 'Lavinie's' dresses they had when they were little, and give me a sample of everything to carry home, and there would be doughnuts or cookies in the middle of the afternoon, and a whispered promise of tea later, as if the forbidden thing might be heard in the kitchen at the top of the hill. When preparations for supper began I ran out to play in the running brook at the back door, to make waterfalls, and ponds, or a great canal like the one Grandmother went on by packet from Utica to New York.

There was a low place at the foot of a sandy hill where the sweet flags grew very thick. When other things failed I tip-toed on the clots of marsh-grass while the cold mud oozed through the laces of my shoes, to

pull up the roots and lay them in a little basket to be preserved in sugar when I got home. One day I found a trough leading the water from the brook over to the sand-bank above the swamp. Days passed, the little stream never tired of its work, and finally the hill was half gone and the low place with its sweet flags and marsh-grass was a level meadow.

Uncle Joseph was big and fat. He had a little rim of hair near his neck, but the rest of his head was bare as a turnip. He was Auntie's husband and was always sitting by the stove in winter. He didn't work any more and spent hour after hour just whittling. Looking out the kitchen window you could see his great dark empty distillery rotting away in silence.

I was glad when he was not in the house, for it was always—

"Is that little black nigger I saw at your house your brother?" or, "Does your grandmother wash your nose up or down?" and then he would laugh as if it were great sport, when my face reddened or my lips drew together in a pout.

I always wanted to ask why Auntie should be working all day—she was as old as he. But there he sat year after year whittling his stick, or pulling out the stove-hearth to spit. Of course it is nice not to do anything—but why must Auntie work so hard? Indeed, I was so full of why's that Uncle George called out whenever he saw me, "Why, why, why, here's little Miss Why-why!"

When I came to go home, Auntie Dwight would pick a handful of her spicey pinks and red roses that covered the hill behind the distillery. Her red roses running up the slope and nodding in the wind against the blue sky—I'm afraid I would have stolen them if I could.

CHAPTER X.

Uncle Ben.

"Now, Jennet," said her mother, one bright afternoon, "your father and grandmother and I are going to a wedding over at Solon, and you will stay with Aunt Betsy, and she'll do something to make you have a good time."

"Oh, I want to go."

"It's a long way over to Gen. Northway's, and we'll be late getting home, and beside little girls never go to weddings."

"Can't I go to Aunt Adeline's if she has one, and it's here?"

"Of course, child, but that's in the family. Run along now—Aunt Betsy knows what you like."

Jennet stood at the gate and watched them ride away. They grew smaller and smaller, and finally the carriage was gone behind the elm trees that stand by the watering-trough at the bend in the road. Then she ran to find her best playmate.

"They're gone, Aunt Betsy; what can we do?"

"If it was winter and we had a fire we could sugar off. Let's see—shall we go down by the river and gather herbs? I haven't been out yet and it's time for hoarhound and lobelia and mullein.

"Oh, good! and there will be flowers too—red balm and speckled field-lilies. I'm going to learn to doctor folks too, can't I?"

"Yes, when you're bigger. It's a good thing to know that sumach buds are best for sore throat, wintergreen for rheumatism, and lobelia for a 'puke' in case of poison."

"You'll teach me, won't you? and when people are sick I'll give them catnip tea so hot it'll bite, and tell 'em to drink it right down. And boneset—they must swallow that and not spit it out the way Joseph does."

By this time the two were well on their way, and soon found themselves in the cool shade on the river bank. Everywhere was the faint odor of ferns, mandrakes, and berries, and the rustle of leaves in the trees. Jennet threw back her yellow sunbonnet and Aunt Betsy dropped the knife and basket while they listened to the ceaseless flow of the stream and the hum of contented insects, and admired the glittering gold on the butterfly's wing. The old lady fell into a revery—was she thinking of the past and its failures? The placid face was unruffled.

Jennet, who was never still long at a time, was soon running toward the fence, where the choke-cherries were turning from green to red.

"Be careful, be careful!—there's poison-ivy growing there," and Aunt Betsy turned to the present again without a sigh.

"I don't want to get that. My, didn't Joseph look awful? His face was just like the moon, only much redder, and his eyes nothing but slits."

"Come on and help me pick the catnip. It's for babies; makes them feel easy and go to sleep."

"How did it get such a funny name, Aunt Betsy?"

"Because cats like it, I guess. Why, I don't believe a cat's half so pleased with a mouse as with catnip."

"Then the angels called it that so we'd know, didn't they? And oh, Aunt Betsy, wasn't it dreadful that all five of Aunt Mary Jane's kittens died at once?" and Jennet's face puckered at the memory.

"See here," called Aunt Betsy, pushing away the dirt from some fine thread-like roots yellow as gold, which she laid carefully in the basket, "that's gold-thread and

a baby medicine too. And that clump of elder is all in a blow; break off those big heads, and what is left will grow into berries good for chills and fever and erysipelas."

"I can't reach them—they're too high. How pretty and white they are!"

"I dry these blossoms," said Aunt Betsy, getting her arms full, "and make them into tea to cure the baby's cold. And there," pointing a little distance away, "is a bunch of hoarhound. Pick that."

"Is that for hoarhound candy? That's the medicine I like!"

"There, you've had a long lesson. In spring we can gather canker root, bathblows, and Indian turnip. Your father will bring in the cherry bark and sassafras. Sarsaparilla and narrow-leaf dock grow in another place, and we can get peppermint and spearmint in the lane where the cows go to pasture."

"Let's sit down and look at Uncle Ben. I think he must be a mountain, don't you? Stephen laughed at me when I said so to him, but I wish I could go to the top the way Uncle Tucker did, and it spit fire and stones—do you remember, Aunt Betsy? And there was a hole in the top and he went down it three hundred feet! My! I don't suppose there's a hole in the top of Uncle Ben, do you, Aunt Betsy? See the clouds all rolled up in a bunch behind it. They're so soft and easy, would it be like silk or the wool on my lamb's back? I'd like to stick my fingers in them."

"The sky would be just as far away up there as it is down here."

"Stephen told me a riddle, I guess it's about that tree on the tiptop of the hill. Now listen; this is it:

" 'Riddle come, riddle come right,
Where was I last Friday night?
The winds did blow,
The cocks did crow,
The boughs did shake,
And I saw the hole the Fox did make.'

He said Fox was the man's name, and they told Peter to meet them under the tree at ten o'clock at night, but Peter went at eight o'clock and got up in the tree. By and by the Foxes came, and while they dug a big hole they talked how they were going to put Peter in it. And they waited and waited, and never found Peter in the tree. And after the Foxes went home Peter went too. I think that's the tree on top of the hill. I guess I don't want to go there. Maybe the Foxes are there now."

"Sho! Sho!" said Aunt Betsy, "there's no truth in that story." But Jennet told every child that came to see her how the Foxes were under the tree on the hill. They were quite close to the house now, and forgetting for the moment Uncle Ben and his lonely grave, Jennet rattled on:

"I went up the hill as far as the pasture with Joseph last night to drive the cows home, and there were mounds up there, Aunt Betsy. I didn't step on them—father says they're just where the trees have blown over, but Joseph says they're Indian graves, and I guess they are. He said a man stood by one grave and stamped his foot hard and called out three times: "What killed you, poor Indian?" and the Indian said, "Nothing at all." Now, don't you think they're Indian graves?

"And Aunt Betsy, Uncle Ben is not all good either."

"Why, child, why?" and the faded blue eyes seemed to marvel, for her first thought was to find good in everything.

"Don't you remember," said Jennet, "last summer

when I was picking blackberries there under his shoulder and something bit my foot and it swelled all up and you called Auntie Dwight to come over and see it and she put smart-weed leaves on it and you thought it was a snake bite? Uncle Ben shouldn't have snakes. I hate 'em."

"Snakes," said Aunt Betsy, "do a powerful lot of harm, but they're God's creatures and must be some good, even if we can't see it."

"I never knew before that you liked snakes. I think they're horrid wiggly, wriggly things. If I had seen the one that bit me, I'd have killed him, yes, killed him before I hollered!"

"We shouldn't criticise the works of God, Jennet, when we know so little about them. We know He's good even if we can't understand, and we shouldn't say anything He does or makes is bad."

"Well, what's the use of having the word 'bad' then?"

"I think some things are better and more pleasant than others, and it's the difference that makes what we call bad. Maybe if Adam and Eve had not disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden all things would have been good."

"And no snakes, Aunt Betsy?" queried Jennet.

"No snakes," said Aunt Betsy.

"But the serpent was there," said Jennet, "and he is a kind of king snake, isn't he?"

"It's true he tempted Eve, and she told Adam no harm would come, and so they disobeyed God and that was sin. Sin is a fearful thing and always brings punishment. So the serpent was made to go on his belly ever after and be hated of men."

"And why did the snake bite me? Did I sin?"

"Dear little one, we can't explain all the ugly things that happen, but we do know that God is good and our business is to be good, too. Then by and by He will

take us to His heavenly home, and there will be no snakes there nor any bad. We'll forget all that."

Jennet had asked all the questions she could think of for the moment, and was satisfied. The two walked on in silence until Aunt Betsy, looking behind, said: "See, the sun is setting toward the west hill; it must be pretty well on to six o'clock."

Just then Polly from the kitchen came across the road calling: "Aunt Betsy, come quick! Stephen's stepped on a rusty nail!"

So they hurried to the house and with clean rags and salt pork Aunt Betsy did up the wound. Meantime she found out where the nail was, and while Stephen was giving particulars to an admiring audience she slipped away to the barn, hunted till she found the offending nail in an old board on a rubbish heap, outside the barn door. Needless to say, she brought it to the house, greased it with care, wrapped it in flannel, and laid it behind the kitchen stove out of harm's way.

"What are you doing?" asked Polly.

"Just taking care of the nail, so it won't do any more mischief."

"Well, what next?" laughed Polly.

"I make sure Stephen's foot gets well and no lock-jaw set in."

"That's all bosh," said Stephen, "the nail did the harm when it went in—I don't see what more it can do."

Aunt Betsy made no reply, but she took particular care of the enemy and only threw it out when the foot was quite well. Everybody laughed at her superstition, but her good humor was unruffled, and in her heart of hearts she knew what had worked the cure.

CHAPTER XI.

Old Sam.

Old Sam was a neighbor of ours, broad-shouldered, with coarse hands, face browned in the wind, shaggy beard, small piercing eyes, rough-mannered, and given to drink, but shrewd.

One Saturday early in August he and Giles, a slight boy with bronzed hair and complexion, were mowing grass in the ten-acre lot when Uncle George drove by.

"Come over and help tomorrow, George."

"Can't—Sabbath."

"I'll give good wages—better'n the rule."

"P'rhaps you can get Afriky Thompson," suggested Giles.

"Afriky Thompson! Not much! Stutters worse'n, makes more noise'n a squealin' pig tacked on to a guinea hen! I could mow a whole field while I was makin' up my mind to one o' his remarks."

Uncle George drove on, and Old Sam stood looking after him. "Can't move 'em out'n their dumbfounded pious tracks, an' me needin' help the worst way."

The next morning he was early in the field. About ten o'clock he looked up from his mowing, resting his scythe on the ground, and raised himself erect—tall as a pine, straight, and well grounded. A carriage was just disappearing down the road in direction of the church.

"There go those Lee folks again! They work awful hard to keep a day o' rest settin' on those hard benches mornin', noon, an' night. Good 'nough man if he didn't tag to meetin' all the time. His grass needs cuttin' bad's mine an' I'll get the biggest part o' the medder in today

if 'tis Sunday, an' we'll see whose hay holds out longest in the spring."

"The Deacon'll do," ventured Giles. "If he don't drink, he's never loud or silly, an' he's ready 'nough to do the right thing. You aint forgot, hev you, the day he stopped plowin' to go over to those mis'ble good-for-nothing Roodys' an' move 'em to Podunk, where they hed relations to look out fer 'em?"

"Thet's you, Giles, allus standin' up fer the off hoss. But he's one o' them Washin'tonian fellers that's signed the pledge, darn 'em! I'd like to see old Bildad Benson back on thet farm. We'd see doin's! My! wan't he jolly! take a glass any time o' day. I never could see 'twas so much agin him as folks make out, kickin' down a door or two. They was his own doors, wan't they?"

"It aint the same farm 'twas in Old Bildad's day, an' I for one am jes' as well satisfied not to hev his cattle chasin' round in our crops 'cause he can't keep his fences up fer trailin' to the Lion's Head."

"Go 'long 'ith your silly talk! You never did like Bildad. But we'll see, we'll see. They say he's goin' to hev a barn raisin' 'fore long, an' I'd like to know how he kin do thet 'thout a social glass. He can't. The men won't stand sech cussed mean ways, you see if they do."

The time of the barn-raising came. Preparations were on foot early the day before. Ledyard hauled in the logs, split them fine, piled the brick oven full, and started the fire. When all was burned to coals, they were carefully swept out, and bread, pie, mother cake, and training gingerbread pushed in. The door was shut, and when it was opened again, an hour or two later, everything was done to a turn.

In the midst of these preparations came Uncle Jo, the distiller.

"Ye have a raisin' tomorrow, don't ye, Deacon? How much whiskey ye goin' to need? I've an extry fine lot I can let ye hev cheap, seein' it's you an' ye don't patronize very often."

"I don't drink whiskey myself, Uncle Jo, for what I think are good reasons, and I'll not furnish it to anyone else."

"But the men are expectin' it. Things may not be so pleasant if ye disappint 'em. I'd go kind o' slow if I was you."

"I'll not have it, Uncle Jo, if the barn is never raised," and Uncle Jo understood.

They gathered in early from the hills, men and boys too, half-savage, envious of danger, besieging the sun-dial, heart in mouth if ever the kitchen door was opened. The sides were already nailed together. A loud 'he-ho-he' from the master-carpenter, each man bends his back to the lift and strains his utmost. Little by little, wavering and uncertain, the beams and joists mount in the air till the frame is upright; then a man to scale the dizzy top and spike together the four sides. A breathless moment—some one overtops the crowd—the carpenter—crawling up the timbers, unsteady, shaken by the wind—lost if once his nerve should falter—a pause—the firm even stroke of the hammer—a loud hurrah.

Meantime in the house, hurry and scurry. Gallons of coffee, women here, women there. It is "Run along, Jennet," "Run along, Jennet," wherever she turns. Women spreading bread, women frosting cake, women cutting pies, women skimming cream, women piling platters with cold chicken, women everywhere.

The men wash their sweaty faces at the bench by the well and sit around under the trees or on piles of lumber ready for lunch. Then the kitchen door opens and the procession begins — steaming coffee, biscuits,

meat, gingerbread, cake, cheese, pie, pickles—the house seems bursting with good things.

"Stingy cuss!" whispers Sam Dillenbeck, "all this sweatin' an' he aint goin' to give us nothin' to drink."

"Yes, yes," squeaks old Johnnie Peele in his high-pitched voice, "he's what I call a proper mean man."

Sly jokes pass from ear to ear—brains distend along with stomachs.

"Good 'nough lunch," drawls Uncle Jo, "but it's mean principles to make a milk-sop o' everyone else 'cause you're one yourself. It's agin the sperit o' this yer govment, which same agrees to let every man be born free an' ekal an' get his livin' out'n the rest. Now you tell me what I'm gettin' out'n this yer Deacon."

"I call this good eatin', aint none o' you used to better," spoke up Gershom Bates, "an' they'll be no broken heads after it neither. I say it's a good sensible lunch, an' as fer gettin' a livin' if they aint any demand fer yer stuff, Uncle Jo, you'll hev to get to work diggin' same's the rest o' us."

"Oh, I aint goin' to the poor-house yet," growled Uncle Jo.

Old Sam was not always so crusty. He was very fond of boys, and liked nothing better than drawing them into an argument. On his way home from the barn-raising he saw two boys sitting on a log comparing jack-knives.

"Heigho! What you fellers doin'? Don't you hev to go home an' fetch in the cows?"

"Yes, but if we aint there, mother'll have to send Annice."

"Oh, I see; you're shirks."

"If we go every night, why shouldn't Annice just once?"

"You seem to know pretty well what'll be done if you aint there. Strikes me ye must've done it before. A shirk, h'm! Let's have a look at ye. I see, it's cause ye've been at the Deacon's all day. He's a shirk, aint he? Got a nice big house an' lots o' barns. Don't work a bit on Sundays, jes gets up his hosses an' his nice new double carriage, an' rides away to meetin' an' sits there all day doin' nothin'—that's what I call a shirk."

"Oh, but that's not shirking. You mustn't work on Sunday. That's for Sunday-school, an' standin' round talkin' in the church-yard, an' wearin' your best clothes. Why don't you go to church?"

"Wall, I'll see; when silver dollars get rollin' up hill. An' how does Annice like your bein' shirks?"

"She don't do anything all afternoon but sit out in the cool shade and knit an' patch, and it won't hurt her to get the cows one night."

"And—who did ye say she was knittin' fer?"

The boys looked at each other, but said nothing.

"Was it your father taught you to be shirks? I suppose he sits in the cool shade of a tree while you boys hoe the corn—or he sets you to pickin' stun off the east lot. He goes to the Brick Store an' sets round in a chair or holds down the cover to a cracker-bar'l till you get the job done, eh?"

"No, he don't. He works faster'n any man on the north road."

"Well, I don't see how you got the habit then. But you're bright boys, smarter'n any o' Tom Roody's. All seven o' them goes to the poor-house winters an' comes back to their shanty summers. When you get to runnin' things you'll stay at the county-house all the time to git red o' goin' fer the cows an' milkin', won't ye? Let's see, ef ye've started out to be shirks ye'll need a little help—that's what shirks are allus wantin'," and pulling

out his wallet, he handed each of the boys a Spanish two-shilling piece. "Now, you kin grow dollars out'n these here shillin's ef ye plant 'em right, an' not drive the cows neither, provided ye get Annice to do yer work."

"I don't believe it," said Tom, turning his shilling over to read the date—1835.

"Well, I'll be off. Next time I see you boys let me know how yer father an' mother an' Annice like yer bein' shirks."

Two shillings was a large gift in the eyes of the boys, but they hadn't really relished what the old man said.

The winter that followed the barn-raising was slow, and the hay-mows grew bare long before the grass came. Old Sam fed sparingly, and his cattle showed lean sides and bare bones. At last he saw he must buy hay, and he thought of that Sunday morning in summer when he had seen the Deacon driving by to church, for the Deacon was the only one who had hay to sell.

"Giles," he said, just thinking aloud, "I guess those Lees are pretty nigh right about workin' on Sundays."

That was the winter his wife died, and all the tenderness that rested under the rough exterior was stirred to its depths. Nothing more he could do—she was gone. How desolate the house was! Into the loneliness of his grief stole the thought of one last best service — the world should acknowledge her worth long after he was dead and forgotten. Evening after evening, pencil in hand, he studied over a bit of paper. At last the epitaph was ready, and the tallest, whitest stone in the cemetery at Ravenna bears to this day the inscription which still, when almost a century has passed, draws more visitors to her grave than to any other in the county.

"Ann Dillenbeck was her name,
America was her nation,
Ravenna was her dwelling-place,
And Jesus Christ was her salvation.

Now she's dead and in her grave,
And all her bones are rotten.
When this you see
Let her remembered be
And never be forgotten.

The rose is red, the grass is green,
And days are past which she has seen.
In the days to come we'll all remember
Jesus Christ her Great Redeemer."

CHAPTER XII.

The Mite Society.

The Mite Society was meeting with Mrs. Cephas King. The sewing and knitting dealt out and all busy, the president rose to go through the usual form.

"What is to come before the society today?"

"I went to Maj. Berry's of an errand last week," spoke up Amelia Ayr, "and his wife sat before the fire without a cap. She looked so strange I couldn't help asking if she'd forgotten to put it on. 'No,' she said, 'but I've only got one, and if I put that on here I haven't anything for when I go out. I'm afraid of taking cold, but I'm getting so I really don't know how to make one.' I thought we ought to look after that; she hasn't any children."

"I'll give the muslin and lace for two," said Grandmother Lee.

"And who'll do the work?" asked the president.

"I will, unless some one else wants to," said Mary Tolman, the village milliner.

"My husband went only yesterday to Maj. Berry's shop," said Mrs. Deacon Lee, "to get Jennet's foot measured for a pair of horsehide shoes. You know he makes fine shoes better than any one else. Jennet had her foot on the paper and he had marked the size of her sole with the pencil, when he fell back suddenly and almost tumbled from the bench. Yes, we'll have to help them, for they can't help themselves much longer."

"Did he get over it?" asked Mrs. Tewanty.

"Yes, he took a little wine and was soon himself again, but he said he'd felt strange for two days. When

he came to, he picked up his awl and said, holding it out: 'This awl has been all-in-all to me for ten years. It has paid my rent, bought our food, kept us warm, paid our tithes, and it's good to do it's work for ten years more, but it's the hand that holds it fails.' He'll be dropping off suddenly some of these days."

"Just think—he was all through the war of eighteen-twelve."

"Why doesn't he get a pension, I'd like to know?"

"Oh, he's been able to earn a living, such as it was, at the shoemaker's bench."

"I believe the Major says he didn't go to the war for a pension, but to save his country," commented Grandmother.

"The country owes him a pension, anyway, and Judge Miles is the one to see about it. Mrs. Miles, you speak to your husband about it. The idea of letting such a man come to charity!"

"Suppose at the next meeting we each bring eatables and fill a big basket or a barrel, and send it up with the caps," suggested the president, whereupon was a general cry of "Good! Good!"

"We have plenty of yarn on hand," she went on, "taken in dues. We can't get any money out of it unless it's knit into socks. Who's willing to do some of that work at home?"

"You ought to take half a dozen, Amelia Ayr," said Julia Titus; "everyone says you knit a sock in one evening. How do you do it?"

"That's stretching it. I have done it, but it was a long evening, and it was under pressure."

"I heard Mother Boyd went to Albany last week," said Polly Bush, "to see about her eyes. Have you heard, was it so?"

"Yes, and we had a letter last week, and the doctor

thinks nothing can be done to help her. She'll be blind the rest of her life."

"Then she won't be driving to the village any more with Julia! How does she bear up under it?"

"Is it cataracts or inflammation?"

"She didn't write particulars, but it's bad enough anyway. They'll not be home for three weeks. Her husband has bought a double-seated carriage, and they'll drive home in it."

"Now Mis' Deacon Lee'll not be the only aristocrat in town," whispered Julia Titus to Amelia Ayr.

"Have any of you heard how Dick Robbins got hurt? His back is broke, they say," and Aunt Polly took off her spectacles, wiping them as you instinctively do when you have a piece of news every one will want to hear.

"Hurt? Dick Robbins? What is it? I haven't heard. Hurry up! Where'd it happen? Back broken? When was it?" questions from all sides, to which Aunt Polly nods a slow assent.

When all was quiet and eager and she had folded her work neatly and straightened her apron, she began:

"Give me time, give me time, an' I'll tell."

"Time!" cried Julia Titus—"looks's if you was taking it."

"Sunday, perhaps you remember 'twas a pleasant day?" She paused for remarks or objections, but as there were none she went on. "Well, Dick an' a lot o' other boys went butternuttin' on a Sunday, if 'twas Sunday, an' climbed clear to the top. Seem's if these boys never mind what risk they take, do they?" and again she looked around for answer.

"Dear me, what happened?" gasped Grandmother.

"The branch broke an'—well, he fell; that's what happened. He fell so's his back hit a stone an' he couldn't get up. An' they carried him home to his mother. The

doctor says he'll never walk again or even sit up straight."

"Oh, dear; why must he go on Sunday?"

"Those Robbinses never go to church," said Julia Titus.

"Si Robbins's always at the Lion's Head, they say, an' you can't expect children to know more'n their parents, can you?"

"Well, I hope it'll be a lesson," said Aunt Car'line. "How're your neighbors, Mis' Tewanty?"

"Who d'ye mean?"

"The Hickses, of course. Somebody's always ailin' in that family."

"An' pray why shouldn't they be?" spoke up Julia Titus. "Did you ever go there when they wan't smellin' o' opodeldoc, fetty, an' onion poultice enough to knock you down?"

"I just wonder why it is that house should be so afflicted," exclaimed Mrs. Titus. "The Hickses are good honest people."

"It's plain enough to me," answered Emily Potts. "I went there to call last week and was taken in to see Rhoda. I could scarcely get my breath. Shawls and quilts hung at the windows to keep out the sunlight and prevent a breath of fresh air from reaching her. I don't believe that room had been aired for a month, certainly not since Rhoda's been sick. Her mother told me that air and water are the worst things a sick person can have."

"Doesn't Rhoda ever want a drink?"

"Yes, but Mrs. Hicks says that's just a symptom of her disease."

"And Rhoda isn't well," broke in Julia, "till Mrs. Hicks has Hi done up in pork and liniment. Mr. Hicks is the only one that keeps well. I suppose that's because

he's in the shop all day and sitting behind the stove at the Brick Store all evening."

"I wish you'd stop talking behind their backs, Julia," said Aunt Car'line, "I want to hear Mrs. Tewanty tell how they are."

"Every word I said is the truth anyway," insisted Julia.

Mrs. Tewanty folded her hands over her work and looked up smiling, the little curls on either side of her face shaking like leaves in the wind. "I think the matter has been discussed and settled already," she said; "however, I asked the 'prentice boy when he came for milk this morning, and he said Rhoda was able to sit up half an hour."

"Have you been over an' offered to set up with her, Mrs. Tewanty?" asked Aunt Car'line.

"Do you take me for a public nurse? I guess if I did that I'd have a steady job! If you remember I've got a husband that takes as much waiting on as Rhoda, any day. Maybe you don't know what it means to have a nervous person in the family. He won't let the children peep at the table, and after supper they're not to get off their chair till they go to bed, and in the middle of the night if he hears the clock tick, I have to get up and stop it, or take it down cellar. I don't think I'm likely to go around offerin' to set up with anybody else."

"Aunt Car'line," broke in Julia, "I saw you buying plain red and green calico. Are you piecing a quilt and have you got a new pattern?"

"Yes, I've got two. Mis' Ezra gave me one, and my cousin in Smyrna sent me the other. One is the Blazing Star, and the other is the Rose and Lily. You make 'em both by hemming the bright colors on white cloth. They are lots handsomer than Ann Eliza Tuthill's. Say,

Mis' Jeremiah Dix, how'd you say your husband's sister was this fall?"

"Whew!" exclaimed Polly Bush, looking out of the window and seeing Jeremiah Dix and his little boy ride by, "There's that boy in his gingham aprons again! When do you suppose, Julia, that Mis' Dix is goin' to leave gingham aprons off that growin' boy?"

"Well," said Mrs. Dix, who had caught part of the remark and guessed the rest, "I like to have him clean, and I put a fresh apron on him every time he comes into the house."

"It'll be time to skim the milk now before I get home," said Mrs. Titus, who had been showing signs of uneasiness for the last five minutes. "I guess it's time for me to be getting on my things."

"If I don't get home and have the supper on the table at the usual minute," said Mrs. Tewanty, rising also, "my husband'll have a nervous chill and all the family'll want to be joining the circus or anything else that'll take 'em away from home."

It was not long till the president was left alone to pick up the work. She examined the apron Emily Potts had been sewing on—the hem was uneven, the seams not overcast, and the button-hole a pig's eye.

"Oh, dear," she sighed, "and I'm responsible for it all! Catch me being president next year!"

CHAPTER XIII.

The Quilting.

The North American Slender-hand, as Stephen and Ledyard called him, came to the Deacon's more and more frequently, usually before tea, and then he and my Aunt Adeline would go off to ride, or wander into the parlor, and I noticed that my mother didn't follow as she did when the preacher stayed to supper. I liked it quite as well, for if we were by ourselves I could get some one to tell me a story, and if we were in the parlor I shouldn't expect to ask.

"Have you got that white cloth ready for the quilt?" asked my mother one summer morning, when there had already been three quilts and two comfortables taken from the frames. I was beginning to be mystified. But more cloth was sewed on, the cotton laid over it, the cover placed and marked with a border of vines and roses, and the center filled with a fine shell pattern. Again they sat at the frame for days stuffing out roses with cotton, shading leaves with lines of fairy stitching, but the task grew long and tedious for two.

"Now," said my mother at last, "shall we have a quilting or finish it ourselves?"

"I'm not going to have my quilt spoiled. It's for my spare room and will last a life-time. If I can ask just the good quilters I'd like the quilting, it would be more fun. But there are always a lot of know-nothings that expect to be asked."

However, the quilting was decided on, Aunt Adeline asked just those she wanted, and when the day came I made many errands to the pantry to look at the cold chickens, jellies, cakes, custards, and currant preserves;

biscuits were rising on the back of the stove and the oven was still full of things at which I vainly tried to get a peep.

Mrs. Ives, Julia Titus, and Aunt Lucia came early, declaring they wanted to make a record on the wedding quilt. When the places had been assigned, and every one had found thimbles and threaded their needles, the buzz began.

"Who's the new doctor that's hung out his sign on the Sloan House?" asked Aunt Lucia.

"Calls himself homeopathist!" said Mrs. Ives in disgust. "Pity he couldn't have found some Christian name. Who knows what it means, anyway?"

"What it means is plain enough," said Julia Titus, "it's a path to a home. But he can't well be a path to more than one home unless he's a Mormon."

"Oh, pshaw!" and Aunt Lucia gave such a jerk to her thread that it broke right in the middle of a bud. "It has something to do with allopath more'n likely. Dr. Edred is an allopath doctor, isn't he? well, this is just some new kind."

"Where's Adeline? She's been at the Albany Normal, she ought to know."

"Homeopathist?" cried Aunt Adeline from the center of the late arrivals, "he's the doctor of small doses. He puts a pill into a pail of water, dissolves thoroughly, and the patient takes a teaspoonful once in twenty-four hours. He gets well just the same as if he took ten of Dr. Edred's pills."

"I don't believe it," said Mrs. Ives. "He'll not get me to dose that way. When I'm sick I want to know I'm taking something."

"It might be good for Ann Maria Collins," said Aunt Lucia. "Perhaps one thing's as good as another for hysterics."

"He's getting practice anyway. Hannah Mudge says she sees him going in to Jerry Brown's."

"La! that comes of his new wife. I think it's scand'lous throwing over Dr. Edred that's cured Jerry an' the children for the last fifty years. I think he could be churched for doing that," said Mrs. Ives indignantly.

"Come, who are you going to church? Jerry, the doctor, or the new wife?"

"When I was in Albany," said Adeline, "the apothecaries came up to the Legislature to get a law against homeopathy because they compound their own medicine —the drug business seems likely to go begging."

"Good for the homeops" cried Aunt Car'line. "Let the apothecaries 'tend to themselves. I want a drug store not tacked on to any doctor, so when I feel sort o' mean I can get fetty pills without saying ah, yes, or no to anybody. Fetty pills are awful good for nervous folks."

"A man said," remarked Adeline, " 'Similia similibus curantur.' "

"Don't talk Injun, Adeline."

"It isn't, it's Latin, and means 'If anything hurts you, take a little more.' "

"I thought it was some such foolishness."

"Well, anyway, he began by taking his own medicine to see how it would act—that's what I call the 'milk o' human kindness'—for a doctor to experiment on himself."

"Well, I'm glad to know if that's what it is," broke in Julia Titus; "the neighbors hear all kinds of groans from the Sloan House. We didn't know what to think, but if he's experimenting on himself there's no call for interference."

"Have you heard the homeopathic recipe for chicken broth?" asked Mrs. Miles. "Kill your chicken, and hang

it in the sunlight so its shadow'll fall on a kettle of water for one hour. Salt and strain and it's ready for use."

"By the way, Mrs. Lee, do you believe in cold water as much as you did?"

"I think, just as I always have, that it's good for sore throat."

"Well, I don't believe in water cure," said Julia Titus. "This freezing a sore throat and breaking the ice for a bath, and being wrapped up in a wet sheet and giving up every thing you like to eat—it's not sensible."

"Do I understand that that hydropathy doctor claims to cure everybody?" asked Mrs. Ives indignantly. "That means water is good for everything, and we all know it's the very worst thing a person can have for a fever. I shall take no notice of him, and if every one else does her duty he'll soon be frozen out and Dr. Edred get all his practice back again."

"It's my opinion," said Aunt Lucia, "if anyone takes up with hydropathy or homeopathy, it shows a tendency toward superstition. What do you say, Aunt Betsy?"

"Well, Lucia, water's good for lots o' things or God wouldn't have given us so much of it. Sister Lee says cold water's been the saving o' her."

"Where is Grandmother Lee?" asked Mrs. Miles.

"She's away on a visit to New York," cried Jennet, "and she says maybe she'll bring me a china doll, and we're having the party while she's gone 'cause we don't want her to know Aunt Adeline's having so many quilts, and if Aunt Adeline should get married, which of course we don't know, you never can tell what'll turn up, but if she does I'm to——"

"There, Jennet, that's enough; you go out doors and play with Bessie," and Jennet had to leave the room in disgrace, "and miss all the things they'll say," she re-

flected. "But mother can't make me miss my supper, 'cause what I said was every word true. I heard Aunt Adeline say those very words to Stephen when he joked her 'bout 'Lanson—I don't care, it wasn't a lie, anyway."

"What are we coming to," sighed Aunt Lucia, "all these new kinds o' doctors starting up—one can't tell what to believe."

"There aren't any more kinds o' doctors than there are new sects o' religion settin' up," said Julia Titus, "and it's a plaguey sight harder to tell who's right there, and a thousand times more important."

"It's my opinion," said my mother, "that whoever takes the Bible as his guide and lives up to its precepts will voyage safely to the heavenly haven, so let's not worry or judge our neighbors."

"They're all quacks," said Aunt Lucia, "to come here interfering with Dr. Edred, who's been good 'nough for Ravenna for fifty years and more. I consider they're only one degree better'n spirit-rappers. Down in Binghampton, folks consider spirit-rappings mere superstition. I heard the Sloan House had rappings in it, and no wonder; a great unfinished house, unfurnished, just the place for uneasy spirits to come haunting."

"Yes," added Mrs. Ives, "they say there are strange noises over there o' nights; groans, and raps, and a bell aringing—the neighbors think it's spooks, but it may be spirit-rappings for aught we know. Have you been reading about the Fox Sisters?"

"I have," said Aunt Lucia, "and it makes me feel spooks behind my back every time I'm alone. Not so long ago I went up to the garret after dark, and the stair creaked, and the old door groaned, and then the wind blew out my candle—I ran back to the kitchen quick as ever I could, and told Jeremiah he'd have to

go without his boneset tea that night, for I'd never go up there again in the dark."

"Well, Mrs. Dix," said Julia Titus, "I never thought you'd be superstitious. But oh, Aunt Car'line, what is that I hear about you and spirit knockings?"

"Do tell! and who's got it now?" came from all sides.

"Aunt Car'line always gets the news first o' anybody."

"The Judge, as it happened," began Aunt Car'line, "was going to attend court at the county-seat last week, so I thought I'd go 'long and stop for a visit with Mrs. Ezra Wilcox. I'd hardly taken off my bonnet and shawl when she began tellin' 'bout raps—an' right there while we was talkin' kind o' solemn an' quiet, an' I wonderin' what spirit rappin's was, there it came, slow an' reg'lar, behind my chair. I was dretful scared, but Mis' Wilcox was used to it, an' I made up my mind I could stan' it if she could. We spelled out the words and finally it gave a message from Elder Dyer. But all he said was "Damn!" an' then I knew it was a lie. No such word as that ever passed his godly lips when he was alive—then we got up an' made a big noise, an' Mrs. Ezra began gettin' dinner, an' I was that nervous I was all of a tremble."

"Why didn't you hold on to yourselves," asked Mrs. Ives, "an' get something worth hearing? Ask the population o' hell——"

"Aren't you ashamed o' yourself, Amelia Ives! The idea of talking so of that good old Elder Dyer only three months dead! I should think you'd be afraid of a judgment. Talk of churching Jerry Brown!"

"Was that all you heard?" asked Julia, in a disappointed voice.

"All for that day," replied Aunt Car'line.

"Why, have you heard raps since? I don't suppose

the rest of you care about any more of this. Come into the hall, Aunt Car'line, I'm going to know all there is to be found out, and the rest of you can keep right on with your quilting and cake recipes."

"No! No! We want to hear too! We believe Aunt Car'line."

"Sit still Julia, and I'll tell. The next week, as I was spinning on my little wheel at home, and thinking all the time of what I'd heard about the rappings, by and by there came one. It wasn't very loud. I thought at first it was a neighbor, but no one was at the door and the knocks came right along louder, and directly out of the chimney. I was scared almost to death, bein' alone—and I stopped spinning and stood right up an' said, 'In the name o' Jesus Christ, I command you, whoever you are, to depart and never come here again,' and I've never heard another rap."

"I'd've found out who it was anyway, and what he wanted," said Julia, much put out that her curiosity was not to be better satisfied.

"You did just right, Car'line," said my mother. "It is cultivating curiosity, if not superstition, and one never knows whether it's a good spirit or a bad one."

"We're almost through the border," said Mrs. Ives, "and there's only a little of the shell-work. Now be generous, girls, and let Adeline take the last stitch or you'll upset some pretty plans."

"See here now," said Julia, "don't you think we have plans as well as Adeline? She's all settled anyway, and I don't see why some of the rest of us can't make sure, too."

"If Adeline doesn't care, I'm sure I don't," laughed Mrs. Ives.

And as the last stitch was taken, they responded to Jennet's eager call by trooping into the dining-room.

CHAPTER XIV.

Enoch's Wife.

There was one woman came to see us whom I never heard called anything but Enoch's Wife. I never even wondered whether she had another name or not. I loved to see the big black mules, with their long ears and ropy tails, driving up to our door. She was different from everybody else; her head trembled all the time as if she were saying, "No, No!" Her hair and face and eyes were nearly all of the same soft gray color. She wore a black dress and did not always have on a cap. Then you could see her hair drawn tight to the back of her head in a bunch like a walnut. When she did wear a cap it was of black lace trimmed with narrow brown ribbon, and the little strings hung flying in the wind front and back of her shoulders.

Mother said she talked through her nose, but she took so much snuff I for my part didn't see how the sound could get through. Mother said it made her tired to visit with Enoch's Wife, because her head, hands, or some other part of her was always going. But I thought the talk was lively, and I heard a lot of things that other people wouldn't tell me, while she was following my mother round getting dinner on the table.

She never brought her knitting but sat all the afternoon in the rocking-chair with her snuff-box in one hand and a pinch in the other, just swaying back and forth. I was on hand whenever I thought she was going to open the box, hoping she would offer it to me. It was such fun to sneeze, sneeze, sneeze, when I couldn't help it and everyone knew I couldn't. Grandmother would look cross and tell me to stop, but I would go right on

—I had to. I took a big pinch the first time, for I knew they wouldn't let me have another. I often wondered why my Grandmother didn't carry a snuff-box—she always had everything anyone else did. But Grandmother was very elegant. However, Enoch's Wife seemed to get great comfort out of it, as a man does out of his pipe.

Enoch and his wife lived way back in the hills, miles back. Long years and hard work had cleared the forest and coaxed the rough soil into a tolerable farm. The house sat on a little plot leveled out of the side-hill, which sloped gently away to a wooded stream at its foot. Nasturtiums and bachelors' buttons grew along the south side as far as the kitchen door. There were large barns, well filled when winter came, with cows, sheep, and oxen, and everything to feed them on. Enoch himself looked an old old man, for rheumatism had got hold of his feet and chained them to short steps. His face was weather-beaten and worn. His teeth were nearly gone and his voice seemed to come from some far-away upper chamber. But his heart was sweet and fresh as a spring morning, untouched by avarice or the bitterness that so often follows on physical discomfort.

I could clap my hands when I heard my father and mother talk about going up to Enoch's. When we got there we went round to the kitchen door. This was where the family and most of the visitors came. The kitchen was a large airy room and the very heart of the home-life. The meals were prepared and the dairy work done on one side of the stove, on the other a rag carpet covered the floor, and in a warm corner were a rocker and a splint-bottomed arm-chair. On a stand in front of the window lay the family Bible, the weekly newspaper, and a great work-basket with the roll of pieces for making good the daily wear and tear. Here

the company sat until a fire, ready laid in the dining-room stove, could be kindled.

The garden, with its beds edged in sweet alyssum and its trim little paths, was a picture. There were tomatoes —still rare enough to attract curious visitors, quantities of smelly herbs, bitters for the "puke" or fever, horse-radish roots to goad on a reluctant appetite, and leaves for soothing a blister. Bunches of lavender and rose-mary for the piles of linen, and "old man" and "live-for-ever," "old hen and chickens," dear knows what for.

In the middle of the afternoon, if it was spring, Enoch's Wife would put on the maple syrup to sugar off. It would boil away and she would stand and stir and stir and now and then drop a little off the end of her spoon into my cup of water, and then it would be done. I would have some to stir into a grain or stiffen to wax on snow, and Enoch's Wife would fill my saucer again and again till mother would look up and say, "There, that will do, Jennet," and that was the end of that. Then Enoch's Wife would say: "Run down to the pasture, child, and help Fido bring up the cows—you won't have any appetite if you don't."

Then came the dash down hill with Fido, penning the cows in the yard, and dancing round to watch Enoch milk. And such meat, and potatoes, and biscuits, and pickles as we found on the table when we went in for supper!

The square bed up at Enoch's had a teeter over the top from which pink chintz curtains hung down to the floor. The pattern on the chintz spread and hangings was a harvest scene; girls in shepherdess hats, tied under the chin, were raking the grass while the water-jug and dinner basket stood at the foot of an apple tree. Far handsomer than the white dimity curtains Grandmother had—I thought.

"Achsah," Enoch's Wife said one day, "Have you heard the young student preach up at Simms' corners?"

"Yes, once."

"Well, what do you think of him?"

"He's inexperienced; has a great deal to learn yet, I should say."

"Have you heard about his courting up at Eben's?"

"I should think Eben would put a stop to that; Lois is as good as engaged to Amos Towne."

"Oh, but he does look smart in his silk hat, and kid gloves, and store-clothes."

"Virtue is the greatest ornament and good sense the best equipage," my mother would say.

"But then he has only to stand up in the pulpit and talk—that makes the difference."

"Talk doesn't make a pastor any more than dress. It takes knowledge of spiritual things, and I think a little of the homely virtue of making two ends meet, too."

"They do say he preaches good sermons."

"They say a good part of the sermon he preached Sunday about beauty in apple blossoms and moral grandeur in common lives, was taken straight from Beecher," broke in Polly.

"I don't know how that may be, I'm sure," said my mother, "but I don't believe in accusing any one without positive proof. However, I don't fancy his marrying Lois. I was over at Eben's for the day not long ago, and about three o'clock in the afternoon a span of fine horses and a new covered carriage drove into the lane. Lois went out to see who it was, and pretty soon she came back with the young minister. Mary Jane had to go out and hitch the horses in the stall."

"What was the matter? Couldn't he do it himself?"

"It would seem not."

"How did he happen to be driving?"

"Those that know nothing—you know——"

"I suppose he wanted to take Lois out—must 'a' been Deacon Quivey's new carriage—he sets a store by Lois, they say."

"He came in and was introduced—he was a picture in his long-tailed coat and white tie, tall hat, and lavender gloves with the tips of the fingers all neatly pulled out—a woman couldn't have done it better. He took off his hat and set it on his knees, but he sat all afternoon in his gloves.

"'Mr. Le Fevre, do lay aside your gloves and stay awhile,' Eben's wife would say.

"'My dear Mrs. Osgood, it is impossible at this present time to announce the exact moment of my departure. But however limited my call, be assured of my unbounded gratitude for your hospitality.'

"Of course Eben's wife asked him to stay to tea, but he didn't take the gloves off till we went out to supper. What do you think of that for a little place like Simms's Corners?"

"I think he'd better stay in the city where he belongs," said Polly. "He was at a party last night and his broadcloth suit smelled of the tailor's shop, his hair was slick with pomade or bear's grease, I couldn't tell which, and really he was so fine I couldn't think of anything smart enough to say to him; but Mary Ives was there and she and him was real chipper. I suppose she's so familiar with those pictures in her father's shop windows she felt quite at home."

"Polly! Polly!" said my mother, "perhaps if you went to the city you would be just as awkward as he."

"Yes, Polly," said her mother, "you shouldn't talk about clothes. If your skirt hiked up in front and down

behind it would be one of the seven mortal sins among genteel folks."

"Have you never heard, Polly, how apt we are to judge the defects of goodness harshly and sometimes make the most of the redeeming qualities of vice?"

"I've heard," said Enoch's Wife, who was by no means done with the subject, "that down Boston-way they raise parsons like onions, in a bed, and probably he was one of the weak ones that didn't get on well when they are set too close together."

"He should have been pulled up by the roots and cast out before he ever got to Simms's Corners," said Polly, who had of late grown unaccountably bitter on the subject of the new minister.

"Poor soul!" sighed my mother, "when I think of what the future holds for him, my heart aches. Even if he marries a rich wife, things won't always run smooth for the man who can't rub a spot off his own coat, and who needs someone always at his heels to fetch and carry."

"Still," persisted Enoch's Wife, "they say he's going to marry Lois."

"Well, I pity her, but it would be the smartest thing he ever did."

"He intends to be a bishop, so he tells Lois."

"A bishop! Why, he isn't even ordained yet!"

"Yes, he told Lois when he got to be bishop he'd have two thousand a year — and you know Lois likes fine clothes. Or maybe he'd be a professor, he said, if she liked that better."

"Maybees are swarming rather lively for this time of year."

CHAPTER XV.

The Log House.

"Jennet, you've not knit your stent this morning," said my mother. "Go now, six times round on your stocking."

"But mother, you heard father say if it was a dull day we might drive over to Union Center and visit Uncle Jason's. And it is cloudy and I'll not have to knit, will I?"

"He hasn't come in yet, so knit your stent and then you'll be ready. We don't know that you're going, for sure."

"Can I sit in the butternut tree in the garden? I can work better out there."

Once in the tree the wind said, "Rock-a-by baby in the tree-top."

"I can't rock, I have to knit, knit, knit."

Then the bees hummed outside the hive and said, "We're swarming, we're swarming; if you don't believe it, come and see."

"I can't, I can't—oh dear!"

And the birds twittered and sung and flew back and forth over the tree, and their song was:

"Oh, come away, from labor now reposing,
From busy care
Awhile forbear,
Oh come, come away."

"Yes, yes, I want to, but—there! that's three times. It will never get done! I wish Old Granny Garnsey would come for a visit, she knits so fast you can just

see the stocking grow. I guess I'll go in the house, anyway; I'm half done. Maybe Aunt Betsy'll help me."

A day came, not long after, when Jennet and her father in the little democrat wagon behind Old Skip drove through Bangall and up and down steep slopes till they turned off on a road that wound diagonally across Kye's Hill. On one side was a strip of maple trees lying fair to the south. Their owner could depend on a run of sap before any neighboring bush had even heard the call of spring, or the farmer had washed the spiles and buckets, or repaired the arch and boiling pan for the sugar-making.

The hill was steep, and frequent runs were placed across the road to hold the wagon wheels while the horse rested or stopped to drink from the watering-trough. The zigzag rail fences were lined with elder bushes, and tall ferns almost hid the wandering brook.

The top of the hill having been reached, there was a stretch of level ground on either hand, each with its distant fringe of woodland. A field of wheat was in the shock, timothy and orchard-grass were ready for the scythe, potatoes and patches of beans and peas were already turning yellow and gave promise of an abundant harvest. A sharp turn in the road brought them in sight of the log house where Uncle Jason lived. Two small cousins were gathering wild berries in the fence corners, beside old stumps, and along the edge of the wood. Suddenly Edward spied them.

"Jennet Lee and her father! Jennet Lee's come! Jennet Lee's come!"

The house stood in the shade of a tall elm whose drooping branches checkered the bars of sunlight falling through the small-paned windows. A few marigold blossoms were growing on one side of the door and hedged a bed of bachelor buttons in blue and violet and

pale lavender. Farther back toward the spring sunflowers were nodding in uncertain fashion along the path. The broom and mop leaned against the crooked trunk of a beech tree at the corner. Near the doorway was a bench with a water-pail and wash-basin, and above hung the dipper and towel. Between the house and barn, alongside the vegetable garden, were beds of fennel, sage, and dill for spicy flavors in cooking.

The house had only four windows, one on each of three sides and one in the loft above, whose only approach was by a straight ladder from the kitchen below. The first floor was in one room, but there were grades carefully distinguished. In the corner beyond and behind the door was Aunt Mary's four-poster, and pushed underneath was the trundle-bed for the younger children. In the corner opposite the company-bed was piled high with fresh, sweet-smelling straw mattresses and feather-ticks, comforters, blankets, quilts, and pillows, for though the house was small and the family purse lean, there was always a hospitable welcome here.

The space between the beds was the "best room." A strip of rag carpet lay on the floor and softened the noise of little feet. One of the windows was between the beds, and just underneath was a stand with two drawers, and on this lay the family treasures. The big Bible used each morning at family prayers, Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, a hymn-book, a box that held a few bright ribbons, a candy rooster belonging to Edward, a small Bible Ann had won as a prize in spelling, and a glass-covered box holding a few shells with some black and red beans from the tropics called black-eyed Nancys. These were not to be handled often, nor were dirty hands to touch them ever.

At the foot of the bed was Aunt Mary's rocking-chair and the low board cradle that held the sleeping baby.

At the other end of the room were the stove and the pantry, set off by a slender board partition. The table round which they gathered three times a day was pushed to the wall, and between the two ends was a wide-open space for the coming and going, the standing and sitting of the five children.

The morning work was done, the floor clean, and the younger children out gathering berries. Aunt Mary sat holding the baby and singing a hymn, the last line of which she repeated over and over. "The Lord my shepherd is, I shall not want, I shall not want." Her life was full of duties—to keep the house clean and neat and restful, and infinitely cheery and pleasant to all her little brood, to wash and dress and sew for five children and make them presentable with little or no outlay, to train them all for the Lord, to bring them up good, honest, God-fearing men and women, as their fathers before them, and to make ends meet with the few hard-wrung dollars that came in from the farm—for this she had need of the promises made in all times to the faithful. From her quiet hour she was now roused by the cry, "Jennet Lee's come! Jennet Lee's come!"

Jane and Edward at once seized Jennet and bore her away to the orchard.

"My! aren't these apples good? Are they Scrivin Sweets? Father says Scrivin Sweets are the best."

"Oh, Jennet, I found a hen's nest this morning, a big one. It had as many as a bushel of eggs in it!"

"It's no such thing, Edward. Tell the truth or I'll tell ma. There wasn't more'n a panful."

"Jennet, there was — there was a bushel," insisted Edward.

"What a pretty apron you have, Jennet; I wish ma would make me a pink one instead of all those blue-and-white checks."

"Don't you have a dress-up one for when you go a-visiting?" asked Jennet.

"We don't go a-visiting more'n once a year, down to your house."

"Ma takes the baby when she goes and Ann to help her take care of him, and the rest of us have to stay home with Eunice," explained Edward.

"Eunice goes a-visiting though, or somewhere, when the man school-teacher comes."

"She combs her hair down slick, and ties a red ribbon round her neck and puts on her Sunday bonnet and gets into the buggy and away they go. I wish I was growed up, Jennet, I'd take you. We'd have Old Tim and the light wagon, with the long whip, and"—with a wave of the hand toward his sister—"you'd wish you could go, but we wouldn't stop, no siree."

"Children, come to dinner," was the call from the house, and each one ran as fast as the small legs would carry them.

"And how's Aunt Betsy, Deacon?" asked Aunt Mary when they were seated at the table. "Weaving rag carpets and serving the Lord, I suppose."

"Yes, only she puts serving the Lord first. Ah, here's Jason."

"Glad to see you, Deacon; got your haying all done so you can go a-visiting?"

"Not exactly, the visit is thrown in to bring Jennet. I'm going on to Solon to do a job of surveying."

After dinner Jennet's father went to his appointment, Aunt Mary and Ann to their work, and the children again fled to the orchard. It wasn't long before thirsty throats led them to the spring. The tin cup was handed Jennet first because she was company, and she, to be very smart with something she had learned of Nancy

Edred just the day before, passed the cup on to Jane saying, "If you love me, drink."

Then there was a dispute as to which ought to drink first. This was no sooner settled than Jennet cried, "Jane, you drink more than Edward, don't you?"

"No, she doesn't, and I want another cup anyway."

"I guess I'll take another too," and Jane filled the cup again.

"Don't catch a girl getting ahead of me," and Edward drained the cup again.

"You can drink another, Jane," cried Jennet, "see if you can't."

"I guess I can, but I'm pretty near full."

"Oh, but that's a sweet girl, do."

"You needn't think, Jennet, that you are going to make Jane win. I can beat her any day," and Edward drank on.

"Just one more, Jane, and beat him," pleaded Jennet.

"Oh Jennet, I can't, I'm full clear up to my chin."

"If she drinks another, I will too."

"I would if I could," and she lifts the cup to her lips, but shakes her head at last with a tear in her eye.

"There! I told you so. I beat!"

"A snake! A snake!" cried Jennet suddenly, pointing to a quiver in the grass. "Kill him, Edward! Kill him!"

"Every one of you get a stone," said Edward, "and throw it at him and I'll throw the last one and that will kill him."

"I killed the snake!" cried Edward when it was certain the enemy was no more. "I killed the snake!"

"No, sir; I killed the snake," pouted Jennet, "for my stone was the biggest."

"No you didn't," cried Jane, "for I hit him first."

"Don't you remember," said Edward, "I said I'd hit him last and that would kill him."

"For shame, Edward!" said Eunice, who had come to the spring for a pail of water, "Jennet's your company, of course she killed him."

"Let's bury him, anyway," said Edward, and he dug a hole in the soft mud with a shingle and Jane pushed him in with a long stick.

"Take off your hat, Edward," said Jennet, "and we'll say, 'Now I lay me.' There, he's buried all right now—but I forgot—wouldn't the friends like to come forward and take a last look? Fall in line, there, I'll lead—dear me! the sand's fallen in, you can't see anything but the tail, but I guess that'll do—there are lots o' things we ought to do and say, only he's an enemy—but say, did you never hear that dead snakes come to life again if another snake bites 'em?"

"No, but let's see if it's true."

"But we've said, 'Now I lay me,' he's buried—when you bury folks you can't dig 'em up to look at 'em—they can't come out till the last trump sounds."

"That's because they have souls, and maybe it would take their souls away from heaven," said Jane.

"But snakes don't have souls," said Edward, "they just die and that's the end of it."

"Then we can dig him up to see if it's true."

"Let's dig him up now and find a snake-hole and bury him close to it, so the live snakes'll be sure to find him, and tomorrow morning we'll come and see, and if we can't find him then he was bit by another snake and come to life."

"Do you know," asks Jennet, when the second burial has been accomplished, "that snakes grow out of horse-hairs? Tail-hairs, you know, and they must lie in water a long time."

Both the other children opened their eyes wide and

waited breathless to hear the details of this transformation.

"Yes, my cousin Joseph from Boston was at our house last summer, and he said you put them in the watering-trough or somewhere, and by-and-by when you have forgotten all about it live snakes will be there."

"Let's try," cried Edward; "shall I go pull some hairs out of Old Tim's tail?"

"No, you cannot," said Jane, "I won't have hairs pulled out of Old Tim's tail, it would hurt."

"Let's go to the house," suggested Jennet, "maybe the baby'll be awake."

"No, I don't want to," said Jane; "I'd have to tend him."

"But I want to hold him."

"Oh pshaw! you'd get tired of it soon enough if you had it to do regular."

However, they went to the house, but the baby wasn't awake, so they wandered round by the crooked beech tree eating apples.

"Do you know how to have good luck all the year round?" asked Jennet.

" 'Break the first brake
And kill the first snake,
And you'll have good luck all the year.' "

"We've killed the first snake and I know where the ferns grow," said Edward—"come on."

"Oh pshaw!" said Jane, "wish-bones are lots easier. I'm not going way out to the woods. I don't see it makes much difference 'bout tending baby whether I have good luck or poor luck," and Jane leaned over the big rain-water barrel that stood at the corner of the house. "Hello! I see a face in the barrel."

"I see two faces," said Edward, leaning over too.

"Of course, yours and mine," and Jane gave him a slap on the seat of his trousers that sent him headlong into the water.

"Edward is drowned! Mother, come quick, Edward's in the rain-barrel! He'll die! He'll die!"

Aunt Mary came running and pulled Edward out dripping from head to foot. Dry clothes restored his self-assertion, and coming round to where the girls were, he said to Jane:

"You look out, I'll pay you back!" whereupon the girls laughed. "I'll pay you double, double, double——"

A voice from the house now called them to come in, and Jennet found her father waiting for her. As Old Skip was starting out on his jog-trot Jennet turned for a last word:

"Edward, be sure and tell me about the snake. Remember now, and don't forget!"

Once when Edward was about ten years old, his cousin Alfred came and stayed two days. The minute the first hellos were said they started for the barn.

"See here, boys," called Aunt Mary, "you must grow up to be good men like your fathers, and to do that you must know the Law of the Lord. So before you go out to play you learn a chapter from the Bible, for that is the Law of the Lord; and, Edward, you fill the wood-box for the kitchen stove."

"You get the wood," whispered Alfred, "and I'll hunt the shortest chapter in the Bible."

Alfred found the psalm of two verses, the wood-box was filled, and it wasn't long before they were off to the calves and colts, running the fanning-mill when no one was looking, flinging the flail, jumping on the hay, and poking the colt to see him throw up his hind heels.

After supper arrangements began to be made for going to prayer meeting.

"Eunice and Jane," said Aunt Mary, "you will stay home and take care of the house. The baby I shall put to sleep before I go. Edward and Alfred and Ann can go with us to the House of the Lord. Alfred, you know you must honor the Lord by going to His house for prayer and praise," and she pressed her lips together and gave the little shake to her head she always did when she wanted to emphasize what she was saying.

"The Word says, 'Honor the Lord with all thy substance and the first fruits of all thine increase'; so boys, you fill this basket with the best apples you can get from the early sweets and take some of the pears we gathered yesterday, and we'll leave them at the minister's."

"Aunt Mary," said Alfred, "you didn't say all that verse—'so shall thy barns be filled with plenty and thy presses burst out with new wine.' Do you give apples to the minister so you'll get big crops next year?"

"Ah, Alfred, I give because the Word of the Lord tells me to. I want to be an obedient servant in the service of our Lord and Master, and He will send what He sees fit."

"Well but, Aunt Mary, about that other part—'thy presses shall burst out with new wine.' I thought you didn't believe in drinking wine. Why is that in the Bible?"

"It's true, wine is good and useful in its place, but men nowadays, if they drink at all, drink too much and it takes away their will, it takes away their money that should be used for other things, makes them unfit for work, and they cease to honor God; so the safe way is not to drink at all, my boys."

"Mary, are the candles ready?" calls Uncle Jason.

"Don't you remember the new tin candlesticks they've put on the wall? each holding two, and the Mite Society is going to furnish those."

"That's so, and we won't need the stone ink-bottles then either. And Mary, don't let me forget to give Elder Barlow notice of that 'bee' for getting in wood on Friday. There isn't more'n enough for next Sunday."

"Boys," said Aunt Mary, "there will be a chance for every one at the prayer meeting to say something in praise of the Lord. You are not too young and you might repeat a verse from the Psalm you learned this morning, for whoso offereth praise glorifieth God."

"Yes," said Alfred, "the verses will go around, won't they?" winking at Edward.

And so Aunt Mary had God in all her thoughts.

"Well, out with it boy; what is it?" asked Uncle Jason the next morning of Alfred, whom he found wriggling on a stiff chair in the company end of the room, talking to Aunt Mary.

"Please—I want to go home," he whispered confidentially to Uncle Jason.

"Pshaw now, can't you tell your old uncle?" Uncle Jason sat down and drew Alfred into convenient relation with his ear.

"Please, I've *got* to holler—and the baby'll wake up."

"Of course you have—it's a good place out on the gate-post. See here — where's Edward? What! in mother's cookies? I declare you boys are *hollow!* Run along now, out to the front gate—Alfred's got a secret for you"—and out the boys ran, hopping, skipping, jumping, leap-frogging; each wildly eager to get to his post, each delayed by the necessity for getting there in a highly artistic and admirable manner.

"Hurrah for Clay! Hurrah for Harry Clay! Harry Clay! Harry Clay!" first one post, then the other—for a full half hour politics ran high in the gate while Uncle Jason and Aunt Mary smiled inside, and the baby never stirred in the cradle.

In the years that followed, fortune smiled on the log-house family. The children grew like mushrooms after a warm rain. They left the hill-farm and lived in the valley, their house increased in size and comforts. It had a real parlor and plenty of bedrooms, there was a cabinet organ in the sitting-room, and all, from the oldest to the latest baby, could sing. Music was their recreation and entertainment, a solace, an aid and inspiration in family worship. Their singing was a kind of public benefit fund, levied on for funerals, merry-makings, school exhibitions, Fourth of July celebrations, as well as for regular service in the choir.

No call was unheeded by Uncle Jason, whether for voice or hand, and such good cheer and jolly company and funny stories! But time with his burden laid heavy hands on the old man, and finally he passed over the threshold of his home not to return. Alfred, a successful lawyer, at that time a legislator in the midst of men and affairs, hearing of Uncle Jason's death, exclaimed, "I shall always think of him as not belonging to the ordinary class of men. He seemed to me like some noble old Roman; honest, brave, king-like, true to his friends. The earth is brighter for his living here, Heaven will be more welcome to many a weary heart at the thought of meeting him there."

CHAPTER XVI.

Elder Perkins.

"Jennet, now you sit down and be still while we talk," said my mother one summer afternoon when Aunt Lucia had brought her sewing just to have a bit of a visit before it was time to get supper.

"May I have the little trunk with ribbons in it?"

"Yes, and be quiet."

So the little wooden trunk a foot and a half long, covered with dog-skin, hair-side out, and fastened with brass-headed nails, was brought along, with its treasure of bright ribbons and cast-off finery.

"What do these letters on top mean, mother? S. R. D., made from brass nails."

"Sartoff Ridell Davis, my child; he made the trunk one rainy day when he couldn't work out of doors, and gave it to your father."

"Queer name — Sartoff —" said Aunt Lucia. "It sounds Russian."

"Perhaps he was. He was an emigrant boy anyway; came along when we were first married — in need of everything from hat to shoes, and Mathew kept him. We burned his whole outfit, I couldn't harbor that in the house. The boy was almost more than I could stand, but we made him clean, gave him new clothes and set him to work. He turned out to be a good boy and stayed with us four years. Mathew gave him his last name—we couldn't twist our tongues to what he said."

"I should call your house pretty much of a training-school. How many poor ignorant boys have you taken from worse than nothing and trained to honesty and

the habit of hard work? Whatever became of that Jordan boy?"

"Yes, poor in everything but high hopes and persistent grit, wasn't he? He's a lawyer in Rochester now."

"Oh mother, here's the tiniest needle-book all wrapped up in silk paper, and the cover's embroidery and the leaves are all red flannel! Can't I have it for mine?"

"Yes, Birdie, it is yours. Julia sent it to you when you were just one day old, and said she hoped the little fingers would one day weave as beautiful things as her mother's had. Wasn't that nice of her, Lucia?"

"And mother, what's this little green-covered book with hair all tied up in round rings in it?"

"Sh'! Sh'! a memento book—your Aunt Adeline's—made when she was at school—a curl from each of her friends."

"I'm going to make one—and I'll put in some of Bessie's wool, and a lock of Fido's and Old Skip's and Aunt Mary Jane's—if only the kittens hadn't all died! Never mind, she'll have some more, I told her I wanted 'em, and—Mother, why can't kittens go to heaven?"

"Jennet, Aunt Lucia and I are talking"; and Jennet soon forgot her questions in handling the bright ribbons, bits of hand-made lace, old-fashioned collars exquisitely embroidered, baby caps of muslin and lace worked in fairy wreaths and vines and flowers, and finally a piece of Grandmother's wedding dress, rose and gold changeable silk with overshot dots of white.

"How handsome Grandmother must have looked in her long train and little boy to hold it out of the dust, and her white corded silk slippers she keeps wrapped up in her middle drawer!" Then Jennet picked up a sampler; it was yellow, and the big letters looked so strange she could hardly tell what they were. But in the corner

she found—"Achsah Halbert, done in the ninth year of her age, 1810."

"Mother, was that you? How long ago you lived. It's 1846 now. But whose stockings were these, white silk, and legs long enough for Giant Despair?"

"Ah, my dear, those were your father's wedding stockings; and that bit of straw-colored satin with black dots was a piece of his vest. Lucia, do you remember how he looked that night in his ruffled shirt and wrist-bands, his small-clothes and silver knee-buckles, and his handsome coat and waistcoat?"

"Standing straight as a pine in his six feet. Ah, Jennet, you'll never know how fine your father looked then."

"He just looks nice now. There's no man so good as my father."

Aunt Lucia now went on with the interesting news she was telling, how their nephew De Forest was going to see Angelina Littlesmile every week. "He puts up at the hotel and then walks back and forth on the long piazza in full view of the Littlesmile house until Angelina puts out her hand from the window of the Square Room and fastens back the blind. That being observed he walks over in his proud haughty way, his tall shiny hat he bought of Jeremiah not above—let's see, just six weeks ago tomorrow—no doubt he had his mind set on Angelina at the time—he's sly, is De Forest—but where was I?"

"His silk hat——"

"Oh, yes—it's very becoming—just the thing for a clerk in the big store at Casnovia. He goes every Saturday afternoon at five o'clock, and nobody knows when he goes home. They do say Aunt Philomela is dreadfully set up over it," and Aunt Lucia, filled with the pride of being aunt to so elegant and desirable a young

man, added—"She better look out and not be too sure of her chickens, such a smart young fellow as De Forest may look higher than the little town of Platter for a wife, and such advantages as he has being in Casnovia and knowing Mr. Grosvenor, the owner of that big store. They say he takes lots of interest in De Forest."

"Poor dear Melissa," sighed my mother, "so proud and so ambitious! If she could only see her sons now. Well, these boys come rightly by their grand ways from her, and they've got their father's good sense in business too."

"Didn't I see De Forest sitting with your mother Lee last Sunday?"

"Yes, she's given up sitting in the pulpit now Elder Ball's dead, and has gone back to her slip in the center of the church. She's asked De Forest to sit with her on Sundays."

"Do tell, now!"

"Yes, they've put a red cushion on the seat and footstools and a carpet on the floor."

"Well, well, well!" exclaimed Aunt Lucia greatly excited, "while she praises God for His goodness to her and to the children of men, she'll enjoy De Forest's young face and smart clothes and deferential manner."

Meantime, the sky had been getting dark and a sharp peal of thunder rattled the windows.

"Jennet, run and pull down the windows upstairs."

"Shall I go in Parson Perkins' room?"

"No, he'll look after them."

"How long is the parson going to visit you anyway, Achsah? He's been here two months now."

"Oh, well, there doesn't seem to be any other place for him. I don't know how long the church expects to hire him. He's only a temporary supply, you know. There

he is coming downstairs now. He always comes if there is a thunder-storm."

"Is he afraid?"

"I suppose misery——" here the door opened, and the Rev. Perkins, tall, lean, slightly stoop-shouldered, with a squint in his eyes, walked in rubbing his hands.

"A heavy storm," he says, drawing a rocking-chair from the corner. Another flash and a loud clap of thunder. He gets up and shakes the feather cushion and sits down on it, remarking:

"You are aware that feathers are a non-conductor of electricity, and so make a safe as well as comfortable place to sit?"

With the next peal and zigzag flash he takes out a silk pocket-handkerchief, folds it square, and puts it on the top of his head.

"You take good care to protect yourself against the lightning, Elder," remarks Aunt Lucia.

"Yes, I take all the precautions in my power. The ways of the Lord are past finding out, so I take advantage of our moiety of secular wisdom, though it amounts to very little, Mrs. Dix, to very little indeed."

"Mr. Perrin is very sick, did you know that?" asked Aunt Lucia.

"What! the new merchant? No, I hadn't heard."

"He was over in the next county where they're having an epidemic something like cholera; they're taken quite suddenly and die almost before they know it."

"'The New York Evangelist' tells about a disease in the city something like that," said Elder Perkins.

"He was so scared he couldn't talk about anything else after he got home. His wife says she knew he'd have it and die too. I don't know why she should feel so sure, it's almost wicked to be so set on a thing you don't want, it certainly flies in the face of the Gospel.

But however that may be, he came down day before yesterday with all the symptoms and this morning they thought he couldn't live. Hark! there's the church bell now! Some one's dead. I don't know any one else that's sick. Listen! Count the years."

Slowly the bell tolled forty-two and stopped, then struck one, to let the villagers know it was a man.

"It must be Mr. Perrin, he was just about that old. But dear me! look at the time, and it's cleared off too. I must be going," and Aunt Lucia folded up her work.

"I think I'll just go along too," said Elder Perkins, "and give Mrs. Perrin a little of that great comfort we have in the Lord. What a blessed thing it is, sisters, to escape this world of sin and trouble! Oh, welcome Death!"

CHAPTER XVII.

The Singing-School.

Amos pushed back from the table after supper one cold night near the first of December, and called out to Mary Ann:

"Remember, it's Monday night, and we're going to start for the Singing-school in just half an hour."

"Oh, Amos, I can't wash the dishes and be ready quick as that."

"Yes, you can, and we've got to stop along the way and pick up the boys and girls. Likely enough some o' them'll be slow."

"Yes, and you'd be willing to wait half an hour for Deborah and be sweet as honey when she came."

"Just so, just so, and now hurry your dishes. I'm off to the barn."

With much rattle and clatter and bustle the long sleigh and Mary Ann were ready on the minute; Amos cracked the whip, and bells jingled, and the horses jumped ahead over the smooth icy road.

At the first house John, Hannah Jane and Deborah came out.

"How d'ye get along with the subscription paper, John?" asked Amos.

"Pretty well; a few men gave three dollars, and every one I asked gave at least a dollar. If Jim Thompson does as well, the school can run till the first of March."

"That's long enough. The sleighing'll be poor by that time. What's the fun over in your end of the bob, Deborah? You're selfish."

"Get something going yourself, why don't you?"

Reuben, Tom and Elizabeth got on at the next stop.

"Say, Tom," cried Amos as soon as they were well started again, "I hope you haven't forgotten your candle, Mary Ann didn't bring any tonight."

"Be still, Amos Towne," cried Mary Ann, "I guess I know whose candle I shall sit by tonight without asking you."

By the time they arrived at the school-house the bob was packed snug as peas in a pod, all laughing, giggling, screaming, whispering. Sleighs from all directions had soon emptied their loads into the room. The fire had only just been started in the stove and was making a great sputter to get ahead of the cold. Amid the slapping of hands and stamping of feet in the gay endeavor to stir up the circulation, remarks on the weather, beaux, and new dresses passed along from ear to ear, till the solid hard wood logs sent out a heat that drove the merrymakers to benches in another part of the room, while late arrivals with red noses and cold hands took their places.

"Amos, hold over here so I can light my candle," commanded Deborah, and Amos nothing loth reached his candle across the aisle.

"Hold still, or I'll be grown up before——"

"Hello, there's Mr. Stillman now," and there was a call to order as a tall slim youth with soft gray eyes, and a lock of fair hair hanging stubbornly over his forehead, raised his violin to his chin. He drew his well-rosined bow across one string with many quavers and slides to attract attention. A few words of general instruction, the page announced, and the lesson had begun with a violent jerk of his right arm to mark the time and silence his pupils who seemed to have gathered quite as much for social purposes

as for love of art. A long sound followed to start everybody on the right tone, then a peculiar swing of his head to show when the singers were to begin. The volume of sound was immense, but a various shading of tone. A second trial brought better success. The voices attuned themselves to the instrument and the time lagged but little while they sang out "do, re, me," their first lesson being to raise and fall the eight notes.

They sang the scale over and over again till even the dullest head had comprehended the intervals. While the master was explaining clef and staff and lines and spaces, Hannah Jane leaned over to Elizabeth and whispered, "Jim Thompson says Isaac Stillman thumps his melodeon till the keys are all worn out. What do you think of that for thrift? No one'll want to marry him——"

Here the teacher looked very solemn at Hannah Jane, who began at once to study her book.

At the earliest opportunity Elizabeth picked up the broken thread of gossip: "You ought to be ashamed to call Mr. Stillman Isaac."

"Indeed I'm not; he should be thankful I don't call him Ike—everybody outside the Singing-school calls him Ike Stillman—or Ikey."

"Give the skips do, me, sol, do, and back again, do, sol, me, do" commanded the teacher.

All made the skip with sufficient readiness but didn't land at the same port. "Try again, this way, see? Do, me, sol, do—do, sol, me, do."

The hardest were the sharps and flats. Some said they wouldn't do it and some they couldn't do it, and a jargon like the confusion at Babel, when at length they tried to do it.

To help the dull along in finding "do" in the different keys he gave this formula for sharps: "Good dogs all eat bad food;" and this for flats: "Fannie Baker eats apple dumplings good." The uncertain grammar and lack of pertinence were stumbling-blocks far easier to surmount than the purely abstract relation of keys.

At last recess came and the evening was half gone —ten minutes for visiting and eating apples. There was a great hubbub amid a general changing of seats. Hannah Jane and the teacher, whom she now addressed demurely as Mr. Stillman, were whispering in the corner, quite unconscious of the pairs of jealous eyes turned in their direction.

After recess a long singing-book called "The Shaum" was passed, from which they learned hymns. There were only half enough to go around—a sudden snatching of candles, shuffling of feet, to the gay accompaniment of laughter, John was sitting by the fair Amelia, Amos with Deborah, and Tom with Mary Ann. Soon every one had a book, indeed one or two had been slyly tucked out of sight not to interfere with the pairing off they had been counting on all evening.

Everybody sang—there was no talk in that day of "having no voice" for singing, or "no ear" for music.

"Miss Mary Ann and Miss Lucy, please come forward," called the master, "and Mr. Burley and Mr. Towne," and the quartet, proud and a little uncomfortable, walked to the platform amid a momentary pang of envy.

After a time the singing teacher took out his great silver watch and discovered it was nine o'clock. "School's dismissed," he called out, and a rush for the closets follows amid wild cries of "Where's my hood?" "Those are my mittens, Mary Ann Towne!"

"Who's got my comforter?" "Catch him; he's got my muff!" Everybody was crowding or being crowded. Elizabeth found her shawl but her tippet was gone, Hannah Jane's things were on the floor, Deborah hunted the shelf in vain for her hood. But at last all were ready, the candles were put out, the fires banked, and the doors locked.

A shake of bells, a cry of "All aboard for the river-road, at the door, the boys hustle the girls into the long sleigh and wrap them warm in robes and blankets, and so the crowd faces homeward. In the confusion no one knows how Deborah got on the high front seat with Amos, or how each boy happened to slide into just he place he would have chosen of all the world. The shrill sound of the runners vibrates in the frosty air and there is an occasional jarring and scaping as they rub over some rough spot or obtruding boulder. Jokes fly fast and the soul of many a youth is lifted out of itself by a gentle hand-clasp quite out of sight.

CHAPTER XVIII

(1) General Training.

Early in November, when the year's work had been brought to a finish by the harvest and there was breathing time, came General Training Day, when all went to the muster to avoid the fine. It was an institution that following the War of 1812. Once a year every man capable of bearing arms met at an appointed place for drill and instruction in military matters. Those who had this training in hand furnished most of the captains, colonels, majors, and generals, of which we had such a generous sprinkling. The standing army was small and Training Day was designed to supply the country with capable recruits in case of war. With this hard-working people of few holidays or pleasures, it was a festive time, a time to meet, and gossip, and eat, and wear one's best clothes —an opportunity for jest and laughter and love-making. No fathers or brothers or lovers going off to danger and death, but to look handsome in fine clothes, to show off on beautiful horses, and look brave with guns and swords.

The farms were astir before daybreak. Grandfather was in the garret hunting his old 1812 uniform, flintlock rifle, and powder-horn. The small boys were putting the last touch to the wooden sword or gun that had occupied their time for weeks. The women were filling dinner-baskets and the big farm wagons were loading with the whole family going to the General Training. A two-seated basket chair was for mother

and "grandpap," boards across the wagon-box were good enough for the rest.

The regular business of the day was at a standstill with the women as well as with the men. The merry shuttles lay idle in the loom, the tailoress dropped her coat and the goose grew cold on the stove, the schoolmaster regretfully laid down his ferrule, and the housewife hung her strings of apple and pumpkin to dry in the sun. From every direction the gay crowds gathered to hear the martial music of drum and fife. Old men were seeking former comrades, youngsters with hollyhock or pink in buttonhole were running here and there casting sheep's eyes at the girls huddled by the roadside, boys piping up "Yankee Doodle" were picking purple clover and feeding to horses adorned with plumes or ribbons.

Officers in blue coats with epaulets on their shoulders and buttons of gold or shining brass, with waving plumes and clanking swords pranced on young horses scarcely broken to the bridle, while fife and drum rent the air with "Hail Columbia!" Gay-hearted heroes were they, each conscious of some fair worshiper across the way. Up and down the line dashed the orderly, a pack of boys breathless at his heels, his red sash fluttering in the wind.

The privates, supposed to be in uniform and armed with rifles, carried more often than not the rusty flintlock of some Revolutionary forbear, or occasionally, nothing better offering, a broom-stick, would proudly "Present arms! Shoulder arms! Ground arms!" With such a motley crew, looking on the whole rather as a frolic than as serious business, the officers had their troubles. On one occasion a captain unable to keep his men from leaning on their guns or sticks ahead or behind the line after he had straightened

them with his sword, "Gentlemen," he cried, throwing off his cocked hat, feather, red sash, coat and sword, and kicking them aside in a heap on the ground, "form the line and keep it or I'll thrash the whole company!" Instantly the line was straight as an arrow, and the captain, still shaking with ire, buckled on his sword and settled his hat.

In such manner did the great-grandfathers of the rising generation grow familiar with military terms and gain crude acquaintance with army discipline. As for taking aim and hitting the mark, they had been brought up on that.

The supply wagons stood near the camping grounds with rations of training gingerbread, and cheese, biscuits and honey; apple-carts and peddlers' wagons selling candy, cakes, and drinks. The soldiers ate at a long board table, and the families gathered by groups, uncovered their baskets of baked chicken, roast pork, bread and butter, cakes and cookies, and spread the contents on a table improvised by laying boards across the wagon-box. Here the neighbors ate and gossiped, exulted and dilated and expanded in the congenial atmosphere of talk.

When it was Training Day at Ravenna the men drilled in the plain east of the road between the upper and lower villages. From the hill arising abruptly behind, the women and children looked on the evolutions that were to transform farmers, clerks, merchants, traders, doctors, lawyers and preachers into soldiers worthy of the wise Government under which they lived.

The day passed quickly, night drew on, men looked at the sun, lifting a hand to shade their eyes, for few pockets held even a silver watch to tick the hours, saying:

"It's e'en a'most milkin' time now."

Then the gala-crowds and would-be soldiers would disperse in vanishing lines over the hills and down the valleys, back to another year of ploughing and sowing and reaping, of milking, and eating and sleeping, of church-going and wood-cutting and the great Donation Party. Not so the officers, however. These stopped to drink each other's health in many a brimming glass of rum and toddy, dwelling with great relish on their own exploits and expounding with more or less friction the whole philosophy of success in war, with much gesticulation and retailing of hearsays come down with unquestioned authenticity from the War of 1812.

(2) The Donation Party.

When the crops were all gathered in the autumn and the weather had settled down to a steady cold and the snow was well beaten in the roads, then the Donation Party for the minister was in order. Here the regular church members came in touch with those occasional attendants from miles away among the hills who seldom met the villagers in a social way at any other time.

The fathers and mothers came in the afternoon with gifts of money, farm products, and whatever else might be useful to an ordinary family, beside baskets of food for the supper. They had their social chat somewhat interfered with by the fact that the good people had dressed up for the occasion in clothes they were not used to. But they made the best of the restraint and awkwardness and dragging conversation, and no one grudged the sacrifice made to civilization and advancing manners, though even politics and theology could at first scarcely stir them from their decent lethargy.

The younger women bustled about the kitchen mak-

ing the coffee, warming up chicken-pie, pushing tables together, and by the time supper was ready every one was at his ease. The pastor sat at the head of the board, which fairly creaked under its load of good things, and no one dreamed of blushing for an honest appetite. The glory of the feast was the pyramid loaf of fruit cake, white with frosting and surmounted with a tiny evergreen tree, whose branches glistened in the candle-light like the white fields outside in the moon. This was not cut in the afternoon, for the old folks had chicken-pie instead, but it stood on the table to be admired and talked about and guessed upon—who had made it, how many pounds of fruit had gone in—how heavy it was—did it weigh as much as the one last year—and so on. In the evening the top layers were dealt out to the young people, while the big lower layers were to remain for the minister's family.

The donation party has been made a fruitful subject for ridicule, but "Laughing," says a sage, "comes from misapprehension; rightly looked at there is no laughable thing under the sun." And when I remember such gatherings at Parson Ball's house, the sweet-faced, gentle-mannered women bringing their tithe of good things from stores not abundant, more than generous according to their means, it is still beautiful to me spite of the libraries written to the contrary. A reposeful kindness lighted up their faces indicating how congenial was the exchange of good offices. After supper they sat in the parlor, drifting to some quiet corner where they talked of home affairs and village news. Each woman had on a black silk apron, a little cape of the same material as her dress, and a newly laundered cap. It is a picture on which those who have known it love to linger—the homely wrinkled faces of those great-aunts and grandmothers, shining

with the light of warm hearts and gentle loving thoughts.

"Mother Carpeg, have you heard how much butter Patty Ann Silas sold from her one cow last year?" asked Mrs. Buttonwood.

"No, but I suppose she has beat everybody else or she'd not be talking."

"One hundred and sixty-one pounds, beside what she and John used."

"Don't talk about the butter Patty Ann Silas uses! If we ate bacon gravy on our bread all the time,—well, I never skimp our folks for the sake of a big story."

"All I've to say is that when Ella Jane and I dropped in there of an afternoon two weeks ago she had as nice a supper as I ever want to taste."

"She's a prime housekeeper, I don't gainsay you there, but awful neat."

"John says she takes the shine off the plates scraping 'em before she puts 'em in the dish-water."

"She mops her kitchen floor every morning and scours it till it's white as snow. Then after dinner she wipes up the tracks John makes when he comes in at noon."

"Tracks John makes! Why he spends five minutes cleaning up his boots every time he comes in the house, and they say they're clean enough to walk on anybody's parlor carpet."

"John says a fly would slip up on her windows."

"They say she hangs out the biggest wash of the neighborhood."

"How's that? Only she and John——"

"Tildy Ann says she looks out and sees what the others have on the line and if she hasn't as much she goes to the bureau drawer, takes out some sheets, rinses 'em in the blue water and hangs 'em up."

Just then Ella Jane Dix passed by to the other room, and Mrs. Buttonwood whispered:

"You ought to see her fingers, they are that pricked and worn binding hats for her brother Jeremiah, as if they had been drawn across a hetchel; oh, and say, she's had a letter from Maria Williams saying Mrs. Miles is sick enough of that Black River country, just as we all said she'd be—no well short of half a mile, no trees, no nothing like we have in Ravenna, and she wishes she'd never left."

The donations having by this time been duly recorded opposite the name of the giver, they were ready to go home, all but a few women who stayed to clear up and put things in order for the young people who were to come in the evening.

To the boys and girls the joy of the evening lay in the games that went on in the spare room upstairs. Youths a trifle older sought a certain pair of bright eyes and an obscure corner where no one should hear what they were saying and above all, what they were not saying; others were telling fortunes from the corners of a pocket handkerchief, while the lively joking kind ate philopenas and exchanged favors; meantime the silent and bashful filled all the passageways and blocked the doors until getting through was like running into a tangle of blackberry briars.

The small children had their part in the donation party on the afternoon of the second day. Everybody took something—Billy Bates once took a panful of turnovers and was greeted with screams of delight. The children, whose share was always the second table, found it no hardship, and played and fought and sang and ate quite as if their world was not overshadowed by elders.

Some money, a store of varied articles, and a house torn up from garret to cellar was what the pastor's family looked upon when it was all over. This, and a fund of good will, kindly feeling, and spirit of mutual helpfulness such as could not but oil the wheels of the new year kept everything good natured for another twelvemonth at least.

CHAPTER XIX.

Deacon Lee—The Passing of the Puritan.

My father, beloved name! gentle, gracious, kind. If he was sometimes positive and stern, it was because the Right was in danger, as I thought any one should see. When I was eager about something and he shook his head, "Not today, my child," I never doubted his honesty and good-will. I was once more in touch with that mystic Being in which all Ravenna was but a tale that is told and a watch in the night. I felt that in some inexplicable way my wish might have upset that vague balance, to maintain which we had been born into the world. However intangible this something that guides us for our good along strangely thorny paths, however shadowy my feeling of our human limits, what I knew clearly was that my father and I were alike helpless, and that although he knew so much more than I that he had found it to be in the end good and true and even beautiful, yet our disappointments were all equally his and mine, and this was almost next to having no disappointments at all.

His chances at education had been scant—some winters at the district school, some months under a government surveyor, but there had been no lack of moral training. Parents used to hold their children as treasures lent from the Lord, for whom they must render account on the last day, and their zeal in the office was like a Divine fire touching with points of magic light what had otherwise been mean and common in their lot. Natives of an ideal world—where we today feel restless and ill at ease, they walked and talked unconscious. In that

world God waits on man and not a word or act is slight, or trivial, or insignificant.

Side by side with the thirst for God was the thirst for knowledge. But while religion is without money and without price, education is a luxury. Only one in the family could be sent to college. Tradition determined that this should be the eldest son, who was thus elected to enter the ministry. So while my uncle was fitted for Hamilton and entered definitely on a career of thought and study, my father began his four-year apprenticeship in the neighboring woollen-mill.

But blood tells in spite of untoward conditions. In it flow the hopes and convictions of our ancestors, and the Revolutionary colonels, the provincial governors, and especially the dissenting ministers and clergymen of the past were not to be silenced by smells of grease and steaming wool. My father's will was bent on having some share in the broader outlook that comes with reading and contact with great minds. Year by year he and my mother, who had been well educated for her day, followed the acts of Congress, read the speeches of John Quincy Adams, of Clay, Webster and Calhoun, the fiery arguments of Garrison and Wendell Phillips; together they studied the Bible with the help of histories, dictionaries, and commentaries, and, with an occasional book on travel, or on some great political, moral, or industrial issue in our own country or in England, he became in the end a well-read man for his station in life.

I think no hungry ambition for wealth or fame ever tortured his soul. With a clear conscience he was able to provide good things for wife and family according to the accepted standard, and life seemed satisfactory. Death had come only to the aged of his kin, who had passed the gates by the sure light of faith, and were

now waiting for him in the blessed beyond; then why should they be mourned?

He was now forty-five years old, his farm of a hundred acres was paid for, he was laying aside a small surplus each year, and had the joy peculiar to farmers of seeing his land steadily improve in value under his careful management. When in October the dairy buyer came airily along in his sulky flourishing his long steel tryer, testing the quality of butter or cheese and offering a fair price, he always sold, never waiting for a possible higher market, and so was never caught, like some of his neighbors, with the season's output on his hands.

He was not only a farmer but a surveyor as well, and his services were often sought in settling disputes on boundaries, or on waterways and mill-rights, and although he was never a real "Square" like his father, he enjoyed about the same prestige among his neighbors.

He had always been temperate, as indeed a man who takes God for his constant companion must be, but wine had been passed at his own wedding in 1821 in the fine chased glass loving-cup which stood for so many years on the mantel over the fire-place in the parlor with a full decanter by its side ready to be offered to the minister or doctor or friend who might drop in. The cup held a quart, which was quite enough for a large company, as each guest would lift it to his mouth by the two handles, take only a sip, and pass it on to his next neighbor.

But all this became a thing of the past when the wave of enthusiasm for total abstinence was swept through the country by the Washingtonian societies in the years 1836-1840. He was set against all that corrupts, enslaves, or brutalizes men, and judged that a custom so largely social in its nature takes away the support toward a healthy life which society owes to its weaker members. He felt his responsibility like Paul—"If meat

make my brother to offend, I will eat no meat while the world standeth." The suffering and oppressed cried in his soul day and night demanding his championship in word and deed.

Of course the stand he took brought him many a curse, but even the tavern-keeper and his patrons who hated him and his views had absolute faith in his word, and though they would not follow his advice, would send post-haste for Deacon Lee when real trouble came. He eased the death-bed of not a few such by pointing the way into that other world that had so little concerned them until then.

This was the time when the anti-slavery question was at burning heat. It drew him like another self into its maelstrom of moral and political tumult, and he became an abolitionist when it cost him the good opinion of neighbors, the rebuke of political allies, and the gibes and taunts of "Northern men with southern principles." "You throw away your vote when you cast it for John P. Hale," they said, but as it was a question of four million votes his own seemed a trivial matter.

Runaway slaves coming up from the South by the underground railroad often stopped at our house, where they were kept over night and then helped on to reach Garret Smith in the next county north. I didn't enjoy these visits, whether on account of Uncle Joseph's insinuations that they might be brothers and sisters or from sharing my Grandmother's sentiments, who never in her life felt that all men were really equal. She could think calmly of the negro and his wrongs only if he stayed in the South, where he belonged, miles away from her, but when he intruded his shiny black face and soft dark eyes on her own province she was roused to personal revolt that could take no account of general issues. During the exciting times of the Kansas-Ne-

braska Bill she took great relish in nicknaming our little black kitten (and she hated all cats) Little Nebraska Bill, which she ordinarily shortened to Nebrax.

My father's passion for equal opportunity to every man, whatever his race or color or sect, was second only to his passionate acceptance of the one God and the perfect pattern set for human life by Jesus of Nazareth. Under his air of quiet reserve always smouldered a fervid jealousy for God and the Right. I still remember, not without an unpleasant thrill, one occasion on which I saw this inner fire burst forth. There were revival meetings in the Methodist Church, and my Aunt Adeline had planned to go early. She came into the room, bonnet and shawl on, to say good-bye.

"Adeline," said my father, "are you going to this meeting to seek your soul's salvation?"

Adeline had great respect for her brother-in-law, who was old enough to be her father, but his rough solemn way tied her tongue; she couldn't answer in the spirit and temper in which the question was put, she would not be irreverent, so she stood by the window and looked out, seeing nothing, saying nothing.

"Adeline, what is the chief business of life? Just answer that question."

It seemed to me, a child of six or seven, that she stood hours by the window. There was a tense uncomfortable atmosphere in the room. I wondered why someone didn't speak and let things be as usual. I was almost ready to say something myself, but I kept to my book.

There she stood by the window, silent. She wouldn't disregard him by going without an answer, and so she kept standing there looking out of the window. My mother came through the room, glanced in a plaintive way at both, and passed out. Still the grip never let up. The sun was fast slipping behind the hills, she must

say something. All he had done for her rose up like an accusation; she was a Christian, she had always been one so far as she knew; why couldn't she say so?

At last there came faintly, with the effort of a drowning man:

"I know it is; and I do want—I take Him—Jesus, I mean—to be my Saviour."

"I am glad to hear you say that, Adeline, and I hope the decision is made once for all."

He believed in having set times and seasons for performing his duties, not only those of planting, sowing and reaping, but for cultivating the inner vision, and for pondering the invisible things of the spirit. I can even now see him sitting in some retired corner, his Bible or Finney's sermons in his hand, oblivious to passing things. He would read a little, then raising his eyes as his mind filled with the great thoughts, a far-away look would creep over his face—he was walking with God in some distant Eden.

He was a man of genuine and sometimes terrible earnestness. At intervals I thought his moral sense bordered on the tyrannous conscience, and indeed, born in the eighteenth century, he lived not far removed from the rugged Puritan ideals. Family traditions which are now strange and unaccountable were living facts to him. His grandfather—whom he well remembered—a stern old minister in Lyme—on learning that his daughter Eunice, the only giddy girl in generations, had gone to a tavern-ball, went straight to the place with his wife Abiah, kneeled down in the midst of the astonished throng and prayed for the souls of the whole hell-bound company. When he got up some were already slinking off, the more impressionable were in tears, and the party quite broke up. Every one was concerned for his soul's salvation,

and the episode was followed by a revival which threatened to bring all Lyme into the fold of the regenerate.

His grandmother Abiah, a woman of great dignity and of firm conviction, used often to arise in her seat when her husband had finished his sermon and with solemn tone and impressive mien, utter some maxim to clinch his argument. Once it was, "What I say unto you, I say unto all, watch! Watch against sin and guard the door of duty." Again, being weighed down in spirit with a sense of the guilt of unbelief, she arose and solemnly pronounced, "Unbelief! Unbelief! O that cursed unbelief!" and sat down.

Feeling keenly his own lack of education, my father was glad to help his wife's numerous brothers and sisters to the advantages of select schools, and to make possible for the younger ones at least a training at some higher institution. Wherever they went they carried with them the motto that had governed his own life, "There is no swerving from the line of right that may not lead eternally astray." So often indeed was this adage dinned in the ears of those under his charge that in later life the one was sure to suggest the other.

When the call came for money to establish Oberlin College with its liberal provision for the education of both sexes and for persons of every race and color, he gave generously, taking in return scholarships which he later restored to the institution. One of these scholarships he offered to my cousin—a hot-headed young aristocrat—whose father and mother were dead, and who had recently come to make his home with us. Joseph, though positively hungry for an education, scorned to get it among negroes, and my father, shocked at such notions and equally stubborn, refused to give him one cent to go elsewhere. Later he left our house and drifted south to a brother in Memphis. It is interesting to note

that in the end he became a clergyman in Mississippi, where he devoted the best part of his life to reclaiming convicts, the inmates of prisons, and the lowest of the negroes and poor whites.

My father set a high value on the practical side of Christianity. An old man verging on the nineties recently remarked, "I never saw any one take the poor and desolate, clean them up, teach them industrious habits, and instill self-respect equal to Deacon Lee's folks. Many an unpromising chore-boy who received in their kitchen his only instruction in religion and morals, in reading and public affairs, in table manners and politeness, has since become a man of note—a valuable citizen in his community.

My parents took great interest in the church, where in that day all benevolence, intellectual growth, and reform had its beginning. They visited all the members, even those that lived miles away, invited them to their house, showed them a comfortable home and a better way of doing things than they were perhaps acquainted with, took an interest in their plans for their children, suggested further education, and a way of providing the means to get it.

It was where moral questions were concerned that my father was chiefly dogmatic. He could scarcely allow an opposite opinion for fear Truth be distorted. Sometimes this habit asserted itself in purely secular matters. For instance, when my cousin advanced the idea that steam would yet serve the farmer's needs, the old man who had trudged behind his plow for forty years, had mown the grass, and raked and pitched the hay by hand, resented the preposterous notion, and brought his great fist thundering on the table in proof that it could not be done. Both were chips from the same stubborn block, the youth and the greybeard, and each held to his view

with tenacity and some rancor. But my father lived to see stranger things, lived to see the flail and the fanning-mill become a memory, and the threshing-machine a household word.

His life was not without its great and even tragic disappointments. The first savings he had laid away after paying for his farm he had invested in timber land in a neighboring State, with prospect of large returns. Mr. Banning, a prominent business man of Ravenna, had told him of the opportunity and the two had become partners. Roads were poor and rough and Mixton seventy-five miles distant, remote indeed when stage-coach and horseback were the only means of travel through a district for the most part wild and unsettled. Rumors drifted along after a time that all was not going well at the lumber camp; then certain word that not only was his property there in danger, but his farm as well. Care drove sleep from his eyes, a family council decided he should be on the ground before his partner should get wind of what he was up to. It was midnight when this decision was reached. A lunch was got ready as quickly as possible, Stephen was called to feed and curry the General—the best saddle-horse in the stable—and at one o'clock my father was on the road.

There was little rest in the house that night, and morning brought Uncle Adams with the bad news that Mr. Banning had been seen leaving the village early the evening before in an open buggy accompanied by the lawyer. There could be no doubt that he too had heard the rumors and feared his partner might forestall him and spoil his little game. There were two possibilities pointed out by Uncle Adams that gave us a glimmer of hope. The General had great endurance, his load was relatively light, and bad roads are never such an obstacle to a horse as to a carriage. The second hope lay in the fact

that having left town on the night before they wouldn't know that my father was so close behind and they might spend unnecessary time in eating and sleeping.

The week passed slowly; we couldn't hope for news until the traveler should return. At last, on the seventh day, in the middle of the afternoon, my father rode up.

The General's fire was all gone, he was splashed with mud, his gallop was little more than a spiritless walk, and he swayed as if uncertain of his footing. The rider dismounted, gave the horse to Stephen who came eagerly running in from a near-by field, then he came in to us.

"It's better than we feared," he said to my mother, as he sank in a chair, muddy, and thin, and old. While Aunt Adeline got ready some coffee and a bit of a lunch, he washed and changed his clothes, and when he had eaten something we were all ready for the story.

"Yes, I passed 'em," and a twinkle shot for a moment into his eye dulled with anxiety and lack of sleep. "It was the second night on the road. I was going through Lennox about midnight and stopped at the tavern for a bite to eat and something for the General. I saw the buggy in the yard and asked whose it was. We were out of there in ten minutes. I suppose they were all beat out for a little sleep; the man said he was to call them by three in the morning. The General and I didn't waste much time eating or sleeping from there to Mixton, and I got to the camp just five hours ahead. I got a lawyer and the business was all done when the others arrived. I've saved the farm anyway."

On investigation, the lawyer had found evidence of intended fraud that brought Mr. Banning in danger of the law. "Deacon," he said, "we can put your partner where the dogs won't bite." But retaliation, even when it was a matter of strict justice, was no part of my father's creed. He thought of the sorrow and mortifi-

cation that would come to a respected and innocent family, of the tainted name to a man who had hitherto stood well in the community. It was settled quietly, the timber land was lost, but the farm remained free of mortgage.

Again the savings put away for the rainy day disappeared in western town bonds. A clever citizen of Ottawa, Illinois, having got to the State Legislature discovered there was no record of the second reading of the bill to bond the town, so that the city, if it wished, could in law disclaim its responsibilities, and make all the desired improvements out of these ill-gotten gains without its costing the citizens a cent. And in this wholesale manner did the town of Ottawa, Illinois, set up in its midst the god of graft. I have often wondered whether taxes were still as low as the morals in the town of Ottawa.

Later still, when a citizen of Ravenna invented a lock that promised well, my father, wishing to foster home industry, put a considerable amount into a factory. When this had swallowed practically all the savings the town afforded, it died, and contrary to all philosophy, carried its goods along with it.

But none of these misfortunes were in the end a real or lasting grief. That was reserved for his old age, when the young minister of his church brought in new ideas concerning Christian faith and doctrine that seemed to him subversive of the true foundation. The latter was popular with the young, and his coming had opened up a whole undreamed world of thought to many of them. My father's ideas and those of his generation were scholastic, centuries apart from this modern divine with his pleasing personality, his city-bred wife, sweet, gentle, with fine sensibilities, an intimate knowledge of birds and flowers, a love of dumb animals, and his chil-

dren with their pretty manners, fine clothes, and lace collars. He helped to place books and magazines in the families of his congregation, talked of the scientific point of view, and gave free and remote interpretations of the Bible.

Beliefs clashed; and when the test came, a little over half of the church members voted for him to stay. Gradually the old part of the congregation drifted to other places of worship. My father felt himself no longer at home in the church which he, more than any living member, had helped to build and maintain for thirty years. When he left at last it was with the consciousness of performing a duty, of living up to what he conceived to be the eternal plan of salvation.

His last days were pleasant and full of quiet honor among a strange people in a distant State. Among them he was known as "Father Lee." He died at the age of seventy-seven, departing like a traveler to his home-land. His last words were to my mother; "I am ready to go; I have no wish to live longer, but to wait on you when you are feeble."

I have much to thank God for in the memory of my parents, the constant inspiration of their unselfish character. It was not what they said, but what I knew them to be that gave them their power to mould my life and the many lives beside.

CHAPTER XX.

The Clash of the Old and New.

"Achsah, are you going to teach Jennet to spin?" asked Grandmother one day. "She's twelve, and'll never get to be a housekeeper if she doesn't begin pretty soon. What ever will become of her and hers for stockings and blankets if she doesn't know how to card and spin? She'll be nothing more nor less than a slut and a slattern; and why don't you get her some pretty new dresses, and send her to a school where she'll learn genteel manners?"

"Why mother, things aren't as black as that, are they? Jennet has learned to knit and has already six pairs of stockings of her own make laid away in her drawer. She has one bed-quilt done and another ready for the frames. She can hem-stitch and sew a beautiful over-and-over seam. In these days it isn't necessary for a girl to spin and weave as it was when you were young. The factories make such good cloth, really much better than we can, and the cotton thread we buy, you must own it is smoother than our linen."

"I can double and twist yarn on the big wheel now, Grandmother," urged Jennet, feeling somehow as if she were on trial and must produce testimony; "I helped Aunt Betsy warp a piece for blankets last fall; yes, and I filled nearly all her spools and quills for the yarn carpet she made for Mrs. Covert. I know more than you think I do."

Grandmother nodded approvingly, but didn't yield her point.

"To be a clever girl, Jennet, you must learn all your

mother and Grandmother know, and as much more as possible."

"But you must remember, mother, she is learning a great deal more than we ever had to. She's taking lessons on the melodeon, and has to practice her hour every day."

"Yes, and I suppose she'll soon be piping up for some jack-in-the-box to dance—a nice thing for a deacon's daughter!"

"I can play Bonaparte crossing the Rhine, Grandmother, and the Spanish Patriots' March, and sing and play Nellie Bly and Ben Bolt and The Blind Girl."

"And she's going to a select school," continued my mother, anxious to defend her plans, "where beside the three R's she studies physiology and English composition, and has lessons in wool embroidery—you never had that."

"No, thank my stars! but I could spin the finest yarn in Old Lyme, and no one in Connecticut could make crullers, mince pie or bread to beat mine. I see plainly, with her music, embroidery, and *phy-si-ol-o-gy* she'll be a know-nothing, and have no blankets, coverlets, or linen sheets, no bed-ticks, no towels, no nothing to set up housekeeping. I pity the man who will ever be her husband!"

"I hope it will be many a long year before she leaves this house," said my mother gently.

"If you weren't always giving to those sisters of yours, we could begin filling Jennet's chest now, and be provided against the day of her wedding."

"Her father is able to buy her things, mother, when the day comes, and I hope it is a long way off."

"Oh well, if you won't hear reason, you won't, and I guess I'd better go," and Grandmother sailed loftily out of the room.

But she had by no means given up, and when she saw my father the next day, she said, "Mathew, if you'll give me some wool to make Dutch blankets, I'll teach Jennet to spin. She shall not bring disgrace on the name if I can help it."

Jennet had no objections. She had watched Grandmother at the big wheel as she ran back and forth from the spindle, the roll of wool in her hand, pulling and twisting it into a smooth thread, and it looked quite attractive to the restless mind with its restless little hands and body.

"When I turn the big wheel as much as I like," she said to herself, "and the reel snaps every forty rounds to make the knot—why I shall make a skein with twenty knots"—it seemed nearly finished already.

When the rolls came from the woollen mill the old lady of eighty began teaching the childish hands the mystery of pulling them into thread with one hand and turning the wheel with the other, twisting all into stout yarn.

Jennet was glad when the spindle was full and the reel set down in front, for when forty threads were on the reel the snapper buzzed so for a knot.

After the most painstaking instruction in the several steps of spinning, Grandmother left and went off to the next room. Jennet took the roll in one hand, giving the wheel a swift turn with the other, but forgetting to walk backwards in the meantime, the wool twisted into a thick rope and wouldn't pull into a thread at all. She broke it off and tried again with no better success.

"Grandma, come quick," she called. "There's something got into the yarn, and it won't pull out."

"Child, you must go carefully. Turn the wheel and pull on the roll at the same time, and step backwards. You must learn to think of two things at once."

"I can't! Oh, I can't! and besides it isn't two things, it's three. I wish I could make the thing go whiz! whiz! the way you do, and the yarn come smooth and the spindle grow fat right away."

"Patience, Jennet, Rome wasn't built in a day."

But the process was long and tiresome. She would have skipped out to see the boys grind the scythes, she would even have offered to turn the grindstone, hard as it was, rather than go back to the wheel, but Grandmother, once her mind was set, never let go, and Jennet had to stick to it till her stent was done. Sometimes when she was very tired she would suggest, "Perhaps they forgot to feed the chickens this morning," or "Mother says she hasn't eggs enough to make the pound-cake, shall I go hunt some?"

"Dear me! sit still, child, some one else can do that; you are learning to spin," Grandmother would reply.

Grandmother spun the warp herself, Jennet the filling, and Aunt Betsy wove the cloth. The blankets were finished and pressed at the mill and laid away with fennel between for Jennet's own, but this was the beginning and end of her spinning days. The last of the nineteenth century had little use for homemade yarn or cloth.

CHAPTER XXI.

Jennet has a Beau.

When Billy Bates sold his tavern to Mr. Thornton and it was turned into temperance house, the good people of Ravenna couldn't do enough to show their appreciation. Among other things an oyster-supper was occasionally held in the ball-room as a benefit for the worthy man. All but the harum-scarum from Bangall and up among the hills attended with their wives, and it was a very important social occasion. Jennet had often gone with her parents to these parties, and her part had been to keep quiet and listen to what her elders were saying.

But now she was fourteen, seen oftenest in a crimson merino frock, trimmed with black velvet, her much-prized ornaments a gold lead-pencil and heart-shaped slide won as a philopena present at a recent donation party. Her chestnut hair hung in long thick braids such as belong only to the vigor and luxuriance of youth.

When Harry Van Dechten invited her to go with him to one of these oyster-suppers it never occurred to her to say anything but yes, just as she had always done when it was a question of sliding down hill or going on an errand to the Brick Store. Indeed when she thought it over she was a little flattered—someway it felt so like being grown up. She never thought about her parents at all, that they might miss her or be lonely without her, she just had a feeling of terrible depression once in a great while when a suspicion struck her heart of what "they" might possibly say or think.

When the time came she stood by the window breathing pictures into the frosty pane. First the silhouette of a house with two flanking chimneys—it was the ready

skill of long habit, her mind was elsewhere. "I wish he wouldn't come—Oh, dear! What if Uncle Jeremiah should see me! What if he should say something"—it was a pig now, first the head, then the snout then the legs and tail—"out loud—before the others—but maybe he won't be there—maybe his leg up in the graveyard'll be aching so he'll have to tend to getting it turned round—maybe—but I wouldn't want to go with father and mother now—not but what I'd a great deal rather go with them—but"—there was the jingle of bells outside, her cheek flushed, there were steps, the door burst open—no more time for self-inspection; she must get on her things and receive advice.

Harry had a fine horse and new cutter. He flourished his whip, the bells rang out merrily, and away they flew over the glistening snow in the light of a full moon. Everything seemed quite natural so far; there was lots of talk and laughing, for they were schoolmates, and had almost every interest in common, and when they got to the room where the crowd was already gathered the happy consciousness still lingered. The door into the hall was choked with people, and they had to wait their turn to get through. Suddenly Jennet heard a whisper:

"Jennet Lee's got a beau! Well, what d'ye think of that!"

To complete her misery, Jeremiah Dix was sitting at the table immediately in front of her talking with her Uncle Andrew. His back was toward her; there were seats just across the room—if only she could get there safely she thought she could feel like herself. She tried to move in the shadow of Harry—in the shadow of Harry!—poor Harry was at least half a head shorter than she.

"Hello!" cried Uncle Jeremiah, whirling suddenly around, "There's a team! It ought to draw well in har-

ness—the Baptist deacon's son and the Presbyterian deacon's daughter. What do you say, eh?" and he looked around at the crowd chuckling, while Jennet prayed God silently to keep her on her feet till she could get to a chair.

"Likely to be blue blazes when they get to discussing baptism," said Uncle Andrew.

"There comes Elder Stark," said Aunt Lucia, ready to turn attention from Jennet's flaming cheeks.

"H'm! bad for our appetites," remarked Uncle Jeremiah.

"How's that?" asked Uncle Andrew.

"If they ask him to say grace before meat, we may go hungry. He makes the longest prayer of anyone in the county."

As they were taking their seats Jennet heard a loud whisper:

"That red merino dress of Jennet's wasn't made to go to meeting in, all trimmed up with black velvet."

And the answer—"She's getting old enough to go out in company. Now she's begun having beaux, I suppose we won't see any more home-spun woollens and turkey-red calicoes."

The long table stretched quite across the ball-room. Jennet and Harry sat at one end, with her father and mother away at the other. They looked very strange without her. I think a kind of aching pain was in their hearts, as if some one had stepped between them and their treasure—a first foreboding of the future. Meantime, Jennet for the first time in her life was under the necessity of making conversation. She had often heard it made. She had always thought her mother could make it the best of anyone. She tried to remember what she did, but the dreadful pauses frightened her so that she couldn't think. What an odd mess she was making

of it! Words stuck in her throat when the school-examiner and his wife opposite tried to help her out. Her mind was skipping about hither and yon, nowhere long enough to capture an idea. She couldn't think what the matter was—she never guessed herself prey to a disease—that most virulent of all social diseases—*What will they say?*

Supper over, the company scattered into little congenial groups and she began to feel less awkward.

Just ahead of her and to one side, sat Miss Nora, the village teacher. Some ill-humored persons were already beginning to whisper "old maid," and shake their heads, but to her the romance of life was just budding. At her side was the Baptist minister from Platter, a widower of some years' standing. He had already brought her to the supper on two occasions, so that now as they sat lost in conversation, knowing nods and smiles were passed about the room. Just then two boys slid into the seat behind them, evidently with a purpose. The dominie was discoursing sermon-like, and Miss Nora paying rapt attention. Every few moments she put up her hand to brush off something from her neck, then in another minute he would do the same. Meantime, the boys were doubled over with silent laughter. Gradually the conversation in the room dropped to a hum as curiosity drew all eyes to the one spot. Then they saw—each boy had a straw which he now and then touched lightly to the necks in front. Suddenly Miss Nora put up her handkerchief and brushed and brushed, still hanging to the preacher's every word, and with a final vehement thrust exclaimed in her clear high-pitched voice:

"Dear me! how annoying these flies are!"

"Flies, Miss Nora, possess also the 'one touch of nature'—they too pursue the sweets—but I can't see what

they're buzzing around me for," and the minister began vigorously shooing.

It was the pin-prick that burst the bubble of pent-up laughter. The boys broke into a roar in which everybody joined. Miss Nora and the widower took the joke good-humoredly; no doubt they were too happy just then to be disconcerted at anything, for there was a wedding soon and a honeymoon in the parsonage.

CHAPTER XXII.

L'Envoi.

Jennet was now past fourteen. She had been to the district school, had learned to read in Sander's First, had been taught in the Second the prudence of being obedient by seeing how Caroline playing too long with her tea had lost her ride in the carriage. In the Third she was exhorted to beware the voice of flattery by the tale of the Spider and the Fly. She had conquered fractions, English money, and square root, but in English grammar had mostly failed. The select school had introduced her to physiology, American history, and the dramatic part of school exhibitions. She had committed Matthew, Mark and Luke, had learned the Shorter Catechism and recited it before the minister, receiving therefor a Bible with gilt clasps and the donor's name inside.

The games of hide and seek, one old cat, and making pencils from soft rocks in the brook had lost their charm. For chewing gum in school-time she had "been stood" on the floor in front of everybody, and for idleness had had to sit between two boys whose misery was at least as great as hers. She had picked up chips from the wood-pile, washed milk-pans, and piled them pyramid fashion to scald in the sun. She had sewed long seams over and over, hem-stitched pillow-cases and put her initial in the corner with the cross-stitch.

She had at last climbed to the top of the hill, had pricked her fingers and torn her clothes on the sharp thorns of the blackberry bushes deep in the pitfalls of the wood-lot. She had been to Fourth of July celebrations, had ridden eighteen miles to attend the County Fair, had heard P. T. Barnum tell of his cherry-colored

cat, seen ladies ride horseback for a purse, and had luxuriated in the possession of half a dozen peaches.

She had learned geography from a specialist by droning rhymes—"On the south of Maine is Passamaquoda Bay—Passamaquoda Bay." The flourishes of the Spencerian system she got from a writing teacher with very slick hair who wore store-clothes. The art of singing was acquired winter evenings in the old school-house where she sang Do-re-me to time beaten out by some youth earning money to go to college, and she had eaten philopenas with the boys during intermission. She had read the exciting stories of Mrs. E. D. N. Southworth, and "Uncle Tom's Cabin" as serials in the "National Era," and was saturated with romantic ideas from the "Scottish Chiefs."

Her curls had been straightened into long braids, her dresses lengthened till the pantalets no longer showed their white lace edge, and the dress-up silk apron had disappeared.

So far every necessary want had been supplied without her thought. Things broken or torn had been mended, those lost replaced without scolding. All common things had come along as a matter of course. Her mother's smile, her mother's arms, her thoughtful loving care, her father's affection and daily provisions were everyday matters for which she felt no special thankfulness.

She had had her first stir of longing for the vague future and all it promised of things different from what she had and was. Already her desire would wring from it more than she could express—more than she knew. No wonder that later on, with a little more experience, she was tortured by the thought that she had not loved, had not appreciated her parents as they deserved.

It was 1854 when the family council was called to consider the question of sending Jennet away from home for further education. An academy lately reorganized and just then celebrating its fiftieth anniversary, in the neighboring town of Oxford, was decided on as having the fewest drawbacks. The plan was pleasing—it might prove the fulfillment of all the things she so vaguely desired. Thus the child was no more, and with her first adieu to home we take leave of Jennet, peering anxious but not dismayed into the impenetrable future.

THE END.

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